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SRIKRISHNA ;
HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS.
VOL. II.

SRIKRISHNA;

HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS.

VOL. II.

*"My salutation to you in front;
my salutation to you from behind;
my salutation to you from every side."*

Gita, Chap. XI., Sloka 40.

BY

DHIRENDRA NATH PAL.

Calcutta:

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PREFACE.

IN placing the second volume of my humble work before the public, I have very little to say except that I sincerely hope they will kindly peruse this little book. India's greatest Man and God is Srikrishna; India's greatest Religion and Faith is Srikrishna;—nay Srikrishna is the loftiest ideal of the world; he is the greatest source of universal brotherhood and everlasting felicity. Therefore I earnestly and most sincerely ask all my readers to put aside their preconceived misconceptions and prejudices and read this humble work.

I humbly beg to state that I have written nothing in this book that is my own, nor have I created a new Krishna out of my fancy. I have humbly tried to unearth the great Krishna who now lies buried under masses of fiction with which the Puranas and the Mahavarata have been filled up by subsequent writers in the course of many hundreds of years. By putting the searching light of history, analysis and logic, it would not be difficult for any of my readers, if they care to wade through the great sea of the Sanskrit lore, to find out which portions of it are fictions and stories and which are after-interpolations. Krishna, as delineated in this little book, I humbly believe, is Krishna of the original Puranas and the Mahavarata, and Krishna as he really was. Let not my readers form hasty conclusions; let them study the great life and career of the most wonderful man, if man could be so high, of the world with all seriousness, with all

attention and care, with all devotion ; let them try to appreciate and grasp and feel the inconceivable character of Srikrishna, and I have not the least doubt they would cry as did Arjuna on the holy field of Kurukshetra.

“ My salutation to you in front ; my salutation to you from behind, my salutation to you from every side. You are immeasurable, you are inconceivable ; you are all.”

I am glad to say my humble work has received a hearty reception from all classes of the people. I tender my best thanks to all those great scholars and literary men who have so kindly encouraged me by their flattering letters. My best thanks are also due to those of my eminent countrymen and great Englishmen who have kindly purchased copies of my work.

Calcutta, 1st Feb. 1897.

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SRIKRISHNA.

CHAPTER I.

PROPOSAL FOR RAJSUYA.

THE kingdom of Indraprastha became more prosperous and more powerful than the old kingdom of Hastinapur.* With the prowess of arms of his four heroic brothers, Yudhisthira became a very great king. Many chiefs and potentates acknowledged his supremacy, and his treasury was filled with immense wealth.† His relatives, friends, and ministers urged him to assume the imperial dignity by performing the great Rajsuya sacrifice. The grand assembly-hall was ready, his power was immense,—why should he not become the king of all the kings of Northern India ?‡

* After the burning of the forest and building of the Assembly-Hall, there follow eight chapters in the Sava Parva, Mahavarata. They contain a lecture by Narada to Yudhisthira. There is no mention of Krishna in any of these chapters.

† See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapters XXV to XXXII, the conquests of the Pandavas.

‡ From Chapter XIII to Chapter XIX is the Rajsuya Sambhava Parva in which the proposal of the Rajsuya sacrifice

Though tempted to perform this great sacrifice, Judhisthira hesitated ; he was not a man to do things in haste. He knew that there was only one man amongst his friends and relatives who would speak out the truth, however unpleasant it might be. He knew he would not speak things only to please him as his friends, relatives, and ministers often did. He therefore thought of Krishna, and sent a swift messenger to

has been discussed. We have already quoted two extracts from these chapters. (See Vol I. Chapter XVI., Krishna's speech in 65 and 66 pages). We have noted in this chapter many more passages that appeared to us to be the part of the original Mahavarata. Interpolations are very prominent in the Sava Parva of the Mahavarata,—more palpable and easier to be detected than in any other Parvas of the Mahavarata. Repetitions are also too many, and contradictory statements are often met with. We need not say we have rejected all palpable fictions and obvious interpolations.

In Chapters XVII and XVIII, an extraordinary description of the birth of Jarasandha is given ;—we might call it the work of a fourth rate story-teller. It cannot be the writing of the great Vyasa. We quote a passage. Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XVII, Slokas 32—41 say :—

“ O best of the Bharata race, recollecting his former promise, that best of kings (Brihadratha) gave that one fruit (which he received from an ascetic) to his two wives. His two beautiful wives ate the mango, dividing it into two equal parts. In consequence of the infallibility of the Rishi's word, both of them conceived. Seeing them in that state, the king was filled with great joy. Some time after, when the proper season came, each of the two queens brought forth two fragmentary bodies. Each of these bodies had one eye, one arm, one leg, half a stomach, and half a face. Seeing the fragmentary bodies, they began to tremble. The helpless sisters then in great anxiety consulted together. They then abandoned in sorrow the fragments which had life in them. The two midwives then carefully wrapped up those still-born fragments and went out of the inner apartments by the back door. Throwing away the bodies, they returned in haste. O best of men, some time after a Rakshasha woman, named Jara, who lived on flesh and blood, took up the fragments that lay on the crossing of the road. Being impelled by fate, that Rakshasha woman united the fragments to make them easier to carry. O best of men, as soon as the fragments were united, they formed into a heroic child of one body.”

Dwarka to invite the great Vrisni prince to Indraprastha. Krishna was the great Mentor of all the chiefs and potentates of India.

In due time Krishna arrived at the Pandava city. Then in full court king Yudhisthira thus spoke to him.* "O Krishna, I have desired to perform the great Raj-suya sacrifice. But it cannot be performed through my simply wishing for it. You know what is necessary to accomplish it. My friends and ministers have said that I should perform it; but your words will be my guide in this matter. Some, without noting the difficulties, merely out of friendship offer advices; some out of self-interest say what will be agreeable to the listener; some consider what is beneficial to themselves is the only fittest thing to be adopted. But you are above all motives. You have conquered anger and desire. You should tell me what is beneficial both to me and to the world."

The unpleasant truth that his friends, relatives, and ministers did not speak to him, Krishna told him in plain words. He told him that though he was no doubt the fittest person to assume the Imperial dignity, yet he would not be allowed to do it,—not at least without a great struggle,—by Jarasandha who was then holding it in *Aryavarta*. He said,† "O best of the Bharata race, surely are you worthy of becoming an emperor. But, in my opinion, you will not be able to perform the Rajsuya sacrifice, so long as the highly powerful Jarasandha remains alive. He has kept many

* Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XIII., Slokas 46—51.

† Ibid, Chapter XIV., Slokas 61—70.

kings imprisoned in his city, Girivraja.* By defeating all the kings, one after another, he has thus become the master over all the sovereigns. From his fear we have left Mathurah and fled to the distant Dwarka. Therefore I say, O great king, if you desire to perform the Rajsuya, try to release the kings and kill the great tyrant. Unless you do this, your proposal can never be successful, for he will oppose you, he will fight with you, he will destroy your sacrifice,—nay, he may destroy yourself and your kingdom. On the other hand if you can kill him, you will destroy the greatest tyrant of the world. You will save innumerable kings from life-long misery, and earn ever-lasting renown. To kill an oppressor of humanity like Jarasandha would be of the greatest benefit to the world. One who aspires to be the greatest of all kings should have the greatest good of the world as his life's work."

"We are all alarmed," said Judhisthira, "at the prowess and wickedness of the king of Magadha. When you are afraid of Jarasandha's might, how can I consider myself strong enough to fight with him?"

A council of war was then held. Bhima was for immediate fight,—Arjuna was not at all afraid of the wicked king,—Nukula and Sahadeva longed to have a trial of strength with the great Magadha potentate,—the

* The city of Girivraja was situated in Modern Behar. The famous old city of Rajgriha was the ancient city Girivraja. The ruins of these ever-renowned cities are still to be seen a few miles from the modern town of Behar, one of the subdivisional head quarters of the Patna district. The city was enclosed by five hills which still hold up their heads as they did at the time of Jarasandha, and again many hundred years after at the time of Gotama Buddha. In the Mahavarata, these five hills are respectively called, *Vaihara*, *Varaba*, *Vrishava*, *Rishigiri* and *Chaitaka*.

generals and warriors of the Pandava army all expressed their eagerness to march against the Magadha kingdom and crush its cruel king. But Krishna mildly said, "Men of immature understanding begin an act without having an eye to what may happen in future."* Then he turned towards the king and said, "O Sire, with the army that you command, if you meet Jarasandha on an open field of battle, it would not be possible for you to defeat him. His stupendous army will crush yours as a lion does a lamb. It would be mere needless and wanton bloodshed of innumerable men,—innocent and poor,—who should not be butchered either for the guilt of Jarasandha or for the fulfilment of your desire. It would be one of the greatest sinful acts. One should not commit sin even to bring about good. Therefore, O great king, I ask your permission to take with me Bhima and Arjuna, and go to meet the Magadha king. We shall challenge him to a single combat; and as a warrior he will never be able to refuse us. I can assure you, Sire, with whomsoever amongst us three, he elects to fight, he is sure to be killed by him. We shall thus kill him in a fair fight without bringing about a sanguinary war and filling the earth with blood."

"O Krishna," replied the king, "out of my selfish motive and out of desire for the Imperial dignity, depending only on courage, how can I send you to Jarasandha? I consider Bhima and Arjuna as my two eyes and you as my mind. How shall I be able to live without my mind and eyes?"

Arjuna, Bhima and Krishna asked him not to entertain any fear for their safety. They would be sure to

* See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XV.

kill the Magadha king and to return in safety to Indraprastha. They dispelled his fears and anxieties and secured his consent. They then started for the kingdom of Magadha.*

But before they could reach the city of Girivraja, they thought it proper to avoid all public notice. It was impossible for such three men to travel across India without creating a great commotion all over the country. They therefore assumed the guise of *Snataka*† Brahmanas and started on foot as mendicants travelling over the country.‡

* The bare facts that we have narrated in this small chapter have been picked up from eight long chapters *i. e.* from Chapters XIII to XX of the Sava Parva of the Mahavarata. We have already said in our note in page 190 of the Vol I. that a careful study of the Sava Parva would convince any one that it contains much of the original Mahavarata. The reason is that interpolations are more apparant and easier to be detected in this Parva than in any other Parva of the Mahavarata. A little careful study would show that the original and later writings are too distinct to be altogether imperceptible. We shall point them out as we proceed.

† *Snataka* Brahmana is one who has taken up *Snataka* (ascetic) vows.

‡ In the Vagavata, Skanda X., Chapter 70—73, the death of Jarasandha is described. Vishnu Parva and Harivansa say nothing of this affair.

CHAPTER II.



ARRIVAL AT GIRIVRAJA.

TRAVELLING through many countries, the three princes at last arrived at the great city of the Magadha king.* According to custom and ordinance† they did not enter the city through its public gates. They scaled one of the hills‡ that surrounded the city, and then forcing a passage through it, they descended in the streets of Girivraja.

* We are studiously trying to adhere as much as possible to the original descriptions of the Mahavarata, for we have already said that we believe that much of the Sava Parva of the present Mahavarata is the original story written by the great Vyasa. We have, however, rejected many passages as being interpolations and repetitions. Our readers will find that though we have rejected them and did not add any thing, yet the continuity of the narrative or of the description is in no way disturbed. Perhaps this is a sufficient proof that the passages that we have rejected are interpolations and after-additions.

† There were in ancient India some unwritten laws as regards social and military etiquette, manners and customs, morals and ethics. The ancient Aryans strictly followed and respected them. They considered their violation as being the greatest sin. These ordinances were many, and some of them our readers will find in this chapter, such as (1) not to enter the house by the public gate or the city of an enemy. (2) Not to accept the worship of one who is an enemy. (3) Not to fight with one who has grown fatigued. (4) To refuse a challenge to a single combat. We would ask our readers to mark these ancient Aryan "morals" and compare them with those of the modern world. Our readers will come across many of these ancient Aryan ordinances in this little book.

‡ This hill was named the *Chaitaka*.

They then went straight on to the palace,* and sent intimation to the king that they asked for an interview. The permission was soon granted, and they were sent for. When they appeared before the great king, they were asked to take their seats and to accept the worship that was offered to a guest, but they declined both with thanks.† The strange attire and the heroic mien of the visitors struck the king. He looked at them long, and then slowly said,‡ “It is well-known to me that nowhere in the whole world the Brahmans engaged in observing the *Snataka* vows ever adorn themselves with garlands or with fragrant paste. Who are you then, thus adorned with flowers and with hands that bear the marks of the bow-strings? Your costume gives me to understand that you are Brahmans, though you bear all the marks of the warriors? Tell me truly

* Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XXI., Sloka 26 says :—
 “Seeing the great wealth of these shops those best of men, Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna, proceeded along the public streets. Those greatly powerful heroes snatched garlands from the flower vendors.”
 Can we believe that men like Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna would forcibly snatch away flowers from the flower-vendors? This “snatching and asking of flowers” is also mentioned in the Vishnu Purana, Chapter XX., Part V., where it describes the entry of Krishna and Rama into Mathura. Perhaps it was a mere custom for the heroes of ancient India to ask and to accept flowers from their vendors. Flowers are still offered to the heroes all over the world.

† In the Sava, Chapter XXI, Slokas 31-34, it is mentioned that when Krishna, Bhima, and Arjuna met Jarasandha, the latter two kept silent, and Krishna said that they had taken the vow of silence till mid-night. Having heard this Jarasandha retired and met them at mid-night. We have rejected this description as being interpolation. The style of the couplets shows that it is not the part of the original Mahavarata. Besides, this incident is purposeless. There is no reason why Bhima and Arjuna should remain silent till mid-night, for we find later on that the combat was fought publicly before all the people of Girivraja. The challenge was also made as publicly.

‡ See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XXI., Sloka 42-43.

o you are. Breaking down the peak of the *Chaitakā*, why have you in disguise entered the city by other ways than the public gates?"

"O king," replied Krishna, "all men are competent to observe the *Snataka* vows; and as persons who adorn themselves with flowers always gain prosperity, we have adorned ourselves with garlands. The wise men enter their enemy's house through a way which is not a public gate. Only in the house of a friend they enter by the proper gate. We have, therefore, done the same. Know also, O king, that entering an enemy's house with the purpose of accomplishing an object, we do not accept the worship offered by him." "I do not collect," said Jarasandha, "that I have ever done you any injury. When I have done you no harm, why do you consider me as your enemy? I strictly adhere to the practices of my order. I never injure any of my subjects. In bringing this charge against me, you appear to be mistaken."

"Many kings," replied Krishna, "have been made captive by you. After persecuting them, you intend to offer them as sacrifices. You have turned men of your own order into beasts. Having done this cruel wrong to the entire royal race, how do you consider yourself innocent? We practise virtue, and we are capable of detecting virtue; therefore if we do not punish you, our sin will touch us.* We are always desirous of

* We would ask our readers to mark the above words of Krishna. Krishna says that one who is virtuous and at the same time capable of protecting virtue, *i. e.* preventing others from committing sin, is bound to protect virtue and prevent sin from being committed. If he fails in doing it, he is as much a sinner as one who commits sin. In his opinion a man should not only be virtuous and perform all virtuous acts, but he should also

helping all the distressed people ; we have therefore come to kill you. Know that we are not Brahmanas,—I am Krishna, the Vrisni prince ;—these two are the Pandu princes, Bhima and Arjuna. We challenge you to a single combat. Either liberate the kings or go to the abode of Yama (god of death)."

Jarasandha smiled and said, "I never make a king prisoner without defeating him. O Krishna, neither am I the person to liberate my prisoners through fear or by threats. I am ready to fight with troops against troops, or alone against you one, two or three, separately or all together." "O king," said Krishna, "then tell us with whom amongst we three you intend to fight ?"

The great king of the Magadha cast scornful glances at Krishna and Arjuna whom he considered to be too insignificant to be accepted by him as his adversaries. He turned like an infuriated bull towards Bhima and said, "O prince, I shall fight with you. It is always

prevent others from committing sin. In Udyoga Parva, Chapter LXXII., Sloka 18, Mahavarata, we find the following passage. "The sin that is committed by killing one who does not deserve to be killed is as great as the sin of not killing one who deserves to be killed : " *i. e.*, one who does not deserve to be killed should *by no means* be killed, but one who deserves to be killed should *by all means* be killed. Krishna told Jarasandha in plain words, "You are a great sinner, and as we are capable of preventing you from committing sin, we have considered it our duty to make an attempt to stop you in your sinful career. You are beyond all reform,—no amount of persuasion would bring about a change for the better in you,—therefore you deserve to be killed ; that is the only means of preventing you from committing sin. We have therefore come to kill you". Buddha, Christ and other great prophets also tried to prevent the commission of sin in the world by preaching,—but Krishna went a step further. He not only reformed the sinners by preaching, but where he found a sinner beyond all reform, he removed him from the world. To eradicate sin in the world he was as much an evangelist spreading his great teachings broadcast as a judge passing sentence where it was necessary.

better to be vanquished by a superior person than by an inferior one."*

* We have repeatedly said that none should accept the entire Sava Parva (as we now possess) as being written by Vyasa. If we do it, we shall then have to take the following as an actual fact. In Sava Parva, Chapter XIX, Slokas 22-24 say :— "Some time after when king Kansa was killed by Krishna, an enmity arose between him (Jarasandha) and Krishna. The greatly powerful king of Magadha whirled a club ninety-nine times and hurled it towards Mathurah. That excellent club fell at a distance of ninety-nine *Yojanas*". It would be fair to mention that the above is taken from the long and ridiculous description of the birth of Jarasandha, which we have already mentioned in our note in page 2.

CHAPTER III.



DEATH OF JARASANDHA.

JARASANDHA ordered his son Sahadeva* to be installed on the throne and made all preparations for the great combat. We shall once more quote the ancient chronicler ;—

“The priests brought the yellow pigment obtained from the cow, also garlands of flowers and other auspicious articles and various excellent medicines for restoring unconsciousness and for alleviating pains. The propitiatory ceremonies for the king with benedictions were then performed by an illustrious Brahman. Removing his crown and properly binding his hair, Jarasandha stood up like an ocean bursting through its shore. He then rushed at Bhima like the Asura Vala at Indra.† Those two great heroes, Jarasandha and Bhima, with their bare arms as their only weapons,

* This incident shows that Jarasandha was well aware that his end had come. It also shows how strong were some of the unwritten laws of the ancient Aryans. Even a man like Jarasandha did not dare to refuse the challenge or to do anything to destroy his enemies, though he found them alone, unarmed, and unprotected in his own impregnable fort. Jarasandha was sinful, but he was above meanness.

† This refers to the well-known story of the Puranas, the war between the Devas and the Danavas for the possession of heaven. We need not say Indra is the king of the Devas, *i. e.*, the celestials. Many Danava chiefs now and then attacked the plains of heaven and fought with the celestials. Vala was one of them.

then cheerfully engaged in the fight. Seizing each other's arms and twining each other's legs, they slapped their arm-pits.*

It was a wonderful combat ; and all the people of Girivraja viewed at it with wonder and astonishment. They fought on day after day ; none could defeat the other,—both were of herculean strength.† On the evening of the fourteenth day, the great Magadha king grew fatigued,—he stopped to take breath ; but Bhima fought on and pressed him hard. Having seen this, Krishna thus spoke to Bhima.‡ “O son of Kunti, the foe that has become tired and fatigued in the fight should not be pressed. Therefore, O prince, you should not now oppress this king.” But Bhima did not give much heed to the words of the Vrisni prince. He said, “O Krishna, this wretch is still before me with girded loins and of sufficient strength. He should not be excused by me.”§ Having said this, Bhima raised up the strong,

* The description of the wrestling between Bhima and Jarasandha as given in the Mahavarata is long. It covers ten slokas from 10 to 20, Chapter XXIII., Sava Parva, Mahavarata. It shows that wrestling was an art in ancient India. There were various feats of wrestling known to the renowned heroes of that age. In this description of the wrestling we find the names of a few of them, such as *Pristavāṅga*, *Samparva Nemcha*, *Purnakumva*, *Trinapira*, *Purnayaga*, &c. We are sorry we cannot quote here the long description of these wrestling feats.

† Slokas 21 to 22, Chapter XXIII., Sava Parva, Mahavarata say :—“Thousands of citizens, consisting of Brahmans, Khasatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras, and also women and even old men, came out and assembled there to witness the fight. The crowd became so great that it grew to be a solid mass of human beings having no space between two persons.”

‡ Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chapter XXIII, Slokas 32-33.

§ The morals of Bhima could not be so high as those of Krishna, but he had still to defend his action by saying that Jarasandha was not at all fatigued,—so strong was the moral sense of the people of that age.

but now much fatigued Jarasandha and whirled him on high. He then pressed his knees against his backbone and broke his body into two. The people of Magadha were struck dumb by fear; loud lamentations rose every where; but the great king had fallen in a fair fight and there was no alternative left to the people but to submit to the change.*

The imprisoned kings were then all liberated; and with them Krishna and the Pandu princes came to a plain outside the city and encamped. They all expressed their heart-felt gratitude to the Vrśni prince; and they thus spoke to him, "O mighty-armed hero, such virtuous acts are no wonder to you. We were all languishing in the fearful hill-fort of the cruel Jarasandha. To our good fortune you have rescued us and thus earned everlasting renown. We all bow to you. Command us what we shall do." Krishna smilingly replied, "King Judhishthira is desirous of performing the Rajsuya sacrifice. That virtuous king is willing to assume the imperial dignity. Help him in his attempt." They all cheerfully promised to do what Krishna said. They then made him various presents and went away to their respective kingdoms.

Bhima, Arjuna, and Krishna then having received large presents from Sahadeva, the newly installed king of Magadha, started back towards Indraprastha.†

* This incident also shows the respect with which all the people followed the well-known rules of morals. Our readers will find all through this book that the morals of ancient India were very high.

† There are apparent interpolations throughout the two chapters from which we have culled a few facts that we have put in this chapter. In Chapter XXIV., Slokas 22 to 23

They had a triumphal progress through Northern India, for they were now the victors of the greatest king of the Aryan race, nay the destroyers of the greatest tyrant of the age. Thus marching on in the greatest pomp and grandeur they reached in due time the magnificent city of the Pandavas and paid their respects to its pious king.

"O king," said Krishna, "the mighty Jarasandha has been killed by Bhima. All the kings, kept imprisoned at Girivraja, have been liberated. You are worthy of the imperial dignity in every respect. Let therefore the great Rajsuya sacrifice be now performed".

King Judhishtira embraced him in joy.

Krishna thought of Gadura, the celestial bird on whom Vishnu rides. There was no need whatsoever for Krishna's thus thinking of Gadura, but he did it. Here ends the matter,—there is no further mention of the bird. In this chapter also we find that Jarasandha possessed a *celestial* car. There are many more such things all through these chapters. They are evidently after interpolations. We have dropped all these descriptions, and we believe the continuity of the description is in no way disturbed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST WORSHIP.

NOW arrangements were being made on all sides for the great sacrifice.* King Yudhisthira thus spoke to his brothers and ministers :—"Let men be appointed to collect without loss of time all those articles that the Brahmans will direct as necessary for the performance of this sacrifice and also all auspicious necessities and things that Dhaumya† may order to be collected."‡

In due course of time all arrangements were made. The great assembly-hall§, built by Moy, was the place where this magnificent ceremony was to be solemnised.

* From Chapter XXV to Chapter XXX., Sava Parva, Mahavarata, is the *Digvijaya Parva*, i. e., the descriptions of the conquests of the various countries made by the four younger Pandavas. We believe these chapters, if at all parts of the original Mahavarata, were ranged before the description of the death of Jarasandha. There is no doubt that conquests were first made, and the proposal for the Rajsuya sacrifice was then made. This chapter is culled from Chapters XXXIII to XXXIV., Sava Parva, Mahavarata.

† Dhaumya was the family priest of the Pandavas.

‡ The sacrifices of the ancient Aryans required many articles for the performance of their ceremonies. It would not be interesting to give a list of things required in the performance of a sacrifice like Rajsuya. See *Srauta Sutra*, *Satapata Brahmana* &c.

§ See Vol. I, pages 101—102. Here is what happened even to Duryodhana in this magnificent hall. Sava Parva, Mahavarata, Chapter XLVII, Slokas 3—6 say :—"One day the son of Dhritarashtra, Duryodhana, came to a place (in this hall) made of crystal. Mistaking it for water, he drew up his clothes. Finding out his mistake, he wandered over the hall. Some time after he mistook a lake of crystal water adorned with water-flowers for land, and fell into it with all his clothes on".

except God's works all works produce *Karmabandhana*.* Therefore, O Arjuna, perform actions without any desire to obtain their fruits.† The man who is attached to his own self, who is pleased with his own self and who is contented with his own self has no actions to perform. He has no concern in actions done or not done in this world. Nor has he any dependence on any being in the whole world. Therefore without any attachment, perform actions that *ought* to be performed.‡ The man who performs actions without attachment attains to the Supreme. Janaka§ and others attained to the Supreme by performing actions."

* *Karmabandhana*—see our note in chap I., pg. 7.

† Then Krishna goes on to place before Arjuna a precedent. The Gita, chap III., slokas 10-16 say:—"In the time of yore Brahma created the creatures along with 'sacrifice' and said, 'Improve yourself with this. Let it produce all that you desire. Please the celestials and let the celestials please you. Thus pleasing each other, you will attain to the highest good. Being pleased with the sacrifice, the celestials will give you your desired enjoyments. Whoever enjoys the things given by the celestials without giving them first is a thief. The good men, who eat the remnants of sacrificial things, are freed from all sins. The bad men who cook only for themselves commit sin. Creatures are the outcome of food ; food is produced by rain. Rain is produced by sacrifice and the sacrifice is produced by action ; action is produced from Brahma ; Brahma is produced from the Imperishable. Therefore all-pervading Brahma is always established in the sacrifice. The sensual and sinful men, who do not conform to this revolving wheel, live in vain."

There are different explanations of the above ; but we believe the main object of Krishna's citing this instance is to show that this world cannot go on without action ; therefore none can live without performing some physical or mental actions.

‡ The word is *Karjan Karma*,—the works that *ought* to be done ; in brief one's *duties*.

§ Janaka was a great king of Videha. He was vastly learned as well as highly raised in the spiritual matters. It is said he attained to the Supreme. But like other Rishis who are said to have attained salvation, he did not retire to the deep forest. He performed all his Royal duties, and did all other necessary works as

"And again having regard to keeping the people attached to their own duties, you should perform actions. Whatever a great man does, so do the masses. What great men consider authorities, the masses follow.* The ignorant men act with attachment to the fruits of action; the learned men, however, in order to stick the ignorant men to their duties, should act just like them, but without attachment. A wise man should not confuse the minds of the ignorant men who are attached to actions. He should make them take to actions by himself acting without attachment."

"Every thing in every way is done by the laws of Nature.† Only he whose mind is deluded by egoism considers himself the doer of actions. The wise men, who know that Self is distinct from the qualities of Nature as well as from the actions in this world, feel no egoism, knowing that qualities deal with only qualities.‡ A man of perfect knowledge should not shake the beliefs of the men of imperfect knowledge, who, being deluded by the qualities of Nature, form attachment to the actions done by those qualities of Nature."

any other worldly man. Krishna means to say that by performing one's own duties, one can attain to the Supreme as this king did.

* Then Krishna goes on to speak of himself. The Gita, chap III, slokas 22-23 say, "There is, O Arjuna, nothing to do for me in the three worlds. I have nothing to acquire which I have not already acquired, but still I do perform actions &c. &c."

And again slokas 30-32 say, "Therefore dedicating all actions to me and knowing the mystery of Self, engage in battle &c. &c."

† We have translated *Guna of Prakriti* by "law of Nature." It means the qualities, *Satya*, *Raja* and *Tama*, the sources of all actions in Nature."

‡ This sloka refers to those that know that every thing is done by Nature,—who know that it is not they that act but only their senses and organs of actions that act;—these men are never filled with egoism, pride and vanity."

"Even a man of perfect knowledge acts according to his own nature. All beings follow Nature. What then the restraints of the organs of actions would avail?*" All senses have their likes and dislikes for respective fixed objects. But none should be under their control, for they are one's great enemies.† One's own *Dharma*,‡ even if imperfectly performed, is superior to the perfectly performed *Dharma* of others. Death is preferable in performing one's own *Dharma*, for the *Dharma* of others is dangerous.§

* It is a covert attack on the *Sannyasins* who renounce all actions and go to the jungle to obtain salvation. Krishna says such renunciation of all actions will not avail at all,—it will not give salvation to any man, for by doing this, no man can really renounce all actions. He may renounce all physical actions, but he will not be able to renounce all his mental actions.

† Opponents on one's way to the path of salvation.

‡ This word we have not translated here. We have repeatedly said, the word *Dharma* has various significations; it means "religion,"—it means "nature," it means "duty," it means "virtue," and so forth. Here the word is *Swa-Dharma*, i. e. one's own duties, enjoined by Nature.

§ In chapter XVIII., the Gita, slokas 45—48 say :—"Every man, if he performs his own duties, obtains salvation. Hear how man attains to perfection by performing his own duties. Worshipping Him from whom are the exertions of beings and by whom all the universe is pervaded, man is seen to attain to perfection with the performance of his own duties. Better is one's own duty, though imperfectly performed, than another's duty well-performed. Man incurs no sin by performing actions prescribed by Nature. Man must not abandon actions prescribed by Nature, however bad they might be, for all actions are enveloped in errors as fire by smoke.

CHAPTER IV.

VIRTUE AND SIN.

"THEN, O Krishna," asked Arjuna, "by whom impelled does man commit sin, though unwilling, as if driven by some force?"

"It is Desire;" replied Krishna, "it is Wrath,* born of the *Raja* quality in Nature. It is greatly ravenous; it is greatly sinful. Know it to be a great enemy in this world,† As fire is enveloped by smoke, a mirror by dust, the fetus by the womb, so knowledge‡ is enveloped by it. Knowledge is always enveloped by this insatiable fire, Desire, which is the constant enemy of a man of knowledge."§

* Wrath is the result of desire. When desire is in any way checked, then wrath is produced. Krishna says in the Gita, chap. II., slokas 62-63. "Pondering over worldly matters produces desire; desire produces wrath; wrath produces want of discrimination or delusion; delusion produces confusion of memory; confusion of memory produces loss of reason; loss of reason produces final destruction."

† Enemy in the path of happiness in this world and of final salvation in the next.

‡ Knowledge in all these places means the true knowledge, as explained by Krishna in the Gita, chap. XIII., slokas 1-18. See pp. 14-15.

§ In the Gita, chap. XVI. Krishna says:—"There are two kinds of beings in this world, namely "God-like" and "Demoniac." Let me first describe the God-like."

"Fearlessness, purity of heart, perseverance, Yoga of Knowledge, Gifts, self-restraint, Sacrifices, Study of Self, meditation, uprightness, non-doing of injury, truth, freedom from anger, abandonment of the desire for the fruits of actions, peace, freedom from fault-finding, compassion for all, absence of covetousness, gentle-

"It is said that its seat is in the senses, in the mind, and in the understanding of a man. By the help of these three, (senses, mind and understanding) it deludes man by enveloping his knowledge. Therefore, O Arjuna, bring your senses under control and conquer this embodiment of sin (desire) which destroys both *Jnana* and *Bijnana*.* It is said, great are the senses ; greater than the senses is the mind ; greater than the mind is understanding. He who is greater than the understanding,

ness, modesty, absence of restlessness, vigour, forgiveness, firmness, cleanliness, absence of quarrelsomeness, freedom from vanity,—all these belong to a God-like man."

"Now hear about the demoniac men. The demoniac men know not what is *Prabritti* and what is *Nibritti*. (It is very difficult to translate these two words. In brief they mean "mental actions" and "suspension of mental actions.") Neither purity, nor good conduct, nor truth exists in them. They say that this universe is false ; it has no guiding principle, nor has it a God. It has been produced by the union of one another,—the result of lust. These men of lost self and little intelligence and of fearful deeds, believing and depending on this and becoming the enemies of the world, are born for the destruction of the universe. Being indured with hypocrisy, conceit and folly and cherishing insatiable desires, they believe in false things and perform all sinful acts. Cherishing boundless thoughts,—thoughts which are limited by death only,—and considering the employment of their desires as the highest aim of life, being bound in hundred nooses of hope and addicted to lust and wrath, they eagerly desire to possess unfairly the hoards of wealth, so that with them they may gratify their desires. 'This is obtained to-day by me,' 'I possess this wealth,' 'all this wealth will be mine in addition to what I possess,' 'This enemy has been killed by me,' 'I shall kill other enemies also,' 'I am the lord,' 'I am the enjoyer,' 'I am successful,' 'I am powerful and happy,' 'I am wealthy,' 'I am nobly born,' 'Who is there in the world as I am,' 'I shall perform sacrifices,' 'I shall make gifts,' 'I shall be merry,'—thus say all demoniac men deluded as they are by ignorance. Tossed about by innumerable thoughts, enveloped by delusion, and attached to the enjoyment of desires, these men gradually sink into the lowest hell."

* The word *Jnana* we have translated by "knowledge." *Bijnana* means "knowledge in particular." The modern meaning of *Bijnana* is "Science." But we believe the author of the Gita does not mean "Science" by *Bijnana*. Most likely he means the special knowledge of Brahma's unknowable Self (God). Some

namely the *Purusha*, is the great Self. Thus knowing *Him* greater than the understanding and making one's own Self firm (in God) by his own Self, conquer this unconquerable enemy, Desire.

commentators say *Jnana* is the knowledge of God's manifested *Universal* Nature and *Bijnana* is the knowledge of God's manifested *Spiritual* Nature.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT DECLARATION.

"I TOLD this imperishable *Yoga*," continued Krishna, "to Vivaswata. He declared it to Manu ; Manu declared it to Ikshaku. * Thus coming down from generation to generation, it became known to the royal sages. † But this *Yoga* ‡ was lost to the world by long lapse of time; you are my devotee and friend, therefore I have told you this old *Yoga*, for this mysterious knowledge is highly good." §

"Later is your birth," said Arjuna, "prior is the birth of Vivaswata ; how shall I know then that you declared it first. ?"

"Many births," replied Krishna, "of yours and mine have taken place. I know them all, O Arjuna, but you do not know them. Though I have no birth, though I

* These are celebrated kings of ancient India. They are all known as men who attained to the Supreme by their great learning and piety.

† There were two classes of sages in ancient India, namely *Rajarshis* and *Brahmarshis*. The *Rajarshis* were kings who were great in learning, knowledge and piety, and *Brahmarshis* were those that retired into the forest to attain to Brahma and thus became great in knowledge and piety. We have translated *Rajarshis* by "royal sages."

‡ *Yoga* here means the great mysterious knowledge by which a man can attain to the Supreme.

§ This mysterious knowledge is extremely good and beneficial to man, because it points out to him the path of salvation.

am imperishable, though I am the lord of all creatures, yet resting on *Prakriti*,* I take birth out of my *Maya*.†

"Whensoever virtue languishes and sin predominates, I create myself. I take birth age after age‡ for the protection of the good and for the destruction of the bad and for the establishment of True Religion.§ He who truly knows my these wonderful births and deeds|| casts off his body and is not born again. He obtains me (God). Many holy sages,¶ who were free from attachment, fear and wrath, who were full of me, and who were dependent on

* Resting on *Prakriti* means "joining with Nature." See our note pg. 16.

† It is very difficult to give the exact signification of the word *Maya*. It has been variously translated by the words "delusion," "illusion" &c. It is the mysterious result of the great *Purush*—unknowable Supreme One's—resting on *Prakriti*. It is mysterious "Illusion" that comes over the great Self when remains in the human body. This mysterious power of the Supreme One makes a man believe that he is not the Supreme One, but quite a different and insignificant being, living in a vast universe, though really he is none other than the great unknowable One existing in an unknowable state. This mysterious *Maya* can only be destroyed by "true knowledge."

‡ Almost these very words were said by Jesus in St Mathew, chap XXIV., 7-27.

§ Though Krishna has been described as the Supreme Lord by all the Puranas, by the Harivansa and Mahavarata, we have pointed out that except in the Gita, he himself never gave out that he was the Supreme One. On the contrary he more than once said that he was but a man. See vol I. pg. 45. In the Gita he not only declared himself as the Supreme One, but manifested himself in his Great Form before Arjuna. See our note later on, *anent* Krishna's manifestation of his Supreme Form.

|| "The words are *Janma* and *Karma*. Here it means "his incarnation in this world as the Vrishni prince Krishna and his career from his birth in Mathurah to his death in Pravasha."

¶ We have translated the word. *Jnanatapasas* as "holy sages." It literally means, "Those that meditate on Brahma by knowledge."

beauty, firmness, contentment and prosperity,—all live for ever in Krishna.’’

The great Bhishma stopped; the inconceivable love for Krishna, that once pervaded the hearts of stern cowherds, maddened the simple Gopa boys and intoxicated the loving milk-maidens,—that had now cast a blissful halo all over the Aryan land,—overflowed his heart. His voice faltered,—his eyes softened,—his heart palpitated. Raising his voice to the highest pitch he cried, “Yes, we worship Krishna, because he is the origin of the Universe, he is that in which the Universe is to be merged. He is unmanifested Primal Nature,—he is the creator; he is eternal,—he is beyond all creatures.” The voice of the old Patriarch was choked,—he stopped,—he took breath,—he controlled his overflowing feelings,—his unknowable and unfathomable love for Krishna.

After a few moments, he turned towards the kings and said, “Therefore, O friends, you should approve the worship offered to him. This Sisupala is a mere child. He does not know who Krishna is. He always speaks ill of him. Who is there among the old or the young, among these illustrious kings, who does not consider Krishna worthy of worship? We do adore him. If Sisupala considers this worship undeserved, he may do what pleases him.”

Sisupala leaped up like a mass of blazing fire. “Old and infamous wretch of your race,” he roared, “are you not ashamed of your conduct? * Wishing to praise

* In reading the life of Srikrishna our readers must not lose sight of one point,—that there is no direct biographical account of Krishna in the Mahavarata. It is however the only work in which we get some glimpses of his career when he was living in Dwarka. Therefore in knowing him we must look to those of his contemporaries whose history Mahavarata is. In order to

Krishna you describe him before me as great and superior in knowledge and age, as if I know nothing ! 'This man is the foremost of all wise men,' and 'This man is the lord of the Universe,' hearing (your) these words Krishna believes that they are all true. Nothing could be a greater lie. Surely do you live at the mercy of these kings." The old patriarch rose again. "Truly," said he, "do I live at the mercy of these kings. But I do not consider them as worth a straw."

Thus addressed by Bhishma, the kings became exceedingly angry. Some amongst them stood erect, some began to abuse him and others cried, "This sinful wretch Bhishma, though old, is exceedingly boastful. He deserves no pardon. Let this wicked man be killed like an animal, or let him be burnt in a fire made of straw."

fully appreciate him, we must first understand the sublime characters of some of the men in the Mahavarata, such as Bhishma, Vidura, and others. We find that a man like Bhishma was the first to declare him to be not only the first man of his age, but as the Supreme Deity in human form,—a character in which he is still adored and worshipped all over India. As we do not possess any direct biographical accounts of Krishna, we are not at all in a position to judge him and his character; for we get very few incidents of his life and little of his teachings to form our opinion of him, if we are at all capable of doing it. But Bhishma was great in age, knowledge, experience, learning and virtue; in fact he was a personage whose equal may hardly be found in the history of any part of the world. It would therefore be proper for us to follow great Bhishma to understand Srikrishna. As our ancestors have unfortunately left no direct history of the greatest Man on earth, it would be our duty to know him through others who saw his deeds, who heard his teachings, who associated with him, and who knew him best. Bhishma, Vidura and others saw him and knew him well,—and it was they who declared him not only to be the first man of his age, but the Supreme One Incarnate. Those of our readers who do not understand Krishna as Bhishma did, to them we say, as Yudhisthira said to Sisupala, "Bhishma knows well what Krishna is. You do not know him as he does."

Availing himself of this opportunity Sisupala turned to the kings and said, "When I am here to be your general, what are you thinking now? In battle array let us stand against the Vrisnis and the Pandavas." Many of the kings said, "Yes, we must act in such a way as the final sacrificial rites to be performed by Yudhisthira and this worship of Krishna may not be supposed to have our acquiescence." They then all began to consult how to obstruct the completion of the sacrifice. "It became evident," the ancient chronicler says, "that the undeteriorating vast sea of kings with its countless waves of soldiers was making preparations for a fight. Having seen that assembly of kings agitated by anger, as the fearful ocean is lashed by the wind at the time of the universal dissolution, Yudhisthira thus spoke to that foremost of all intelligent men, the grandsire of the Kurus, the aged Bhishma. "This vast ocean of kings has been agitated by wrath. O Grandsire, tell me what should be now done?" 'O best of the Kurus,' replied the old Patriarch, "do not be alarmed. Can a dog kill the lion? These kings are merely barking at the sleeping lion of the Vrisni race.'

He then turned towards the assembled kings and said, "O rulers of earth, I do not see the end of our speeches, for words may be answered with words. Therefore listen to what I say. Here is Krishna present. Him have we worshipped. Let him who opposes this worship challenge him to a battle. This will settle the matter without further ado."

Roaring and foaming the wrathful Sisupala rose and cried, "O Krishna, I challenge you. Come, fight with me till I kill you with all the Pandavas."

CHAPTER VIII.



DEATH OF SISUPALA.

SLOWLY and majestically rose Krishna, his sweet smiles still playing on his lips. There was no anger,—not even the slightest displeasure,—in his heart. When a tempest was raging all around him,—when the strongest abuses were showered upon him by angry Sisupala, and the highest encomiums were given him by great Bhishma,—he sat quite unconcerned. But now being challenged to fight, he, as a warrior, could no longer hold his peace. Calmly rose he, and then addressed the assembled kings thus.* “O kings, this cruel-hearted man is born of a lady of our race, but he is our great enemy. Though we never seek to injure him, yet he always tries to do us harm. Hearing that we had gone to the city of Prag-jotisha,† this man of cruel deeds came and burnt our city of Dwarka, though he was the son of my aunt. When the Bhoja king‡ was sporting on the Raivataka hill, this man killed many of that king’s attendants and carried away many in chains to his own city. In order to thwart my father’s sacrifice, this sinful man stole the horse of the *Ashwamedha*.§ This man of sin

* See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chap. XLV., Slokas 6—14.

† Eastern India. Perhaps it refers to the war that Krishna waged with king Naraka. See our note in Vol. I., page 74.

‡ One of the Aryan clans of Mathurah was called the Bhojas.

§ Horse-sacrifice. A horse is let loose in this ceremony. It roamed over the country for a certain time. A warrior with

stole the wife of the saintly Akrura when she was on her way to the country of the Sauvaras. This wretch ravished in the disguise of the king of Karusha the pious Bhadra, the princess of Vishala, who was the intended bride of the Karusha king. I have patiently borne all his sins and crimes for the sake of my father's sister,—I promised her to pardon his one hundred offences. That number is now full. It is fortunate that all this had happened to-day in the presence of all the kings of India. I shall no longer pardon him ; I shall kill him in the presence of all of you." Sisupala roared, "O Krishna, if you please, pardon me or pardon me not, what can you do to me through good will or anger ?"

The great sacrificial ground became the arena of an extraordinary tournament. The universal joy and merriment soon turned into a general grief and anxiety. Yudhishthira's countenance was a picture of misery,—Bhima grinded his teeth in anger,—Arjuna sorrowfully rose to arrange the field,—but great Bhishma was full of joy and pride, for he knew it would be a mere child's play for Krishna to defeat and kill the sinful Chedi king.

Everything was soon arranged for the great combat. The charioteers of Krishna and Sisupala brought their respective cars. The great generallissimo of the imperial army of Jarasandha and the greatest hero of the age, armed themselves with their bows and arrows, and entered the list. Thousands and thousands of men who had come to see the great sacrifice hastened now to

an army followed it as its guard, and if anybody caught it or stole it, a battle was fought with him. The horse was finally brought back and sacrificed with due rites.

witness this wonderful tournament. Calm and cool stood Krishna, till the same sweet smiles played on the same beautiful lips,—handsome and charming as ever. In his front foamed and roared the wrathful Sisupala,—a giant with fire flashing from his eyes. All hearts palpitated,—all were in anxiety and eagerness.

But the combat though severe was but short. Sisupala's head soon rolled on the ground, and those kings that backed him were struck dumb with fear. They silently returned to their respective abodes and dared not utter a word either against Krishna or against the Pandavas.*

* There are two different versions of this incident in the Mahavarata. Sava Parva, Chap. XII., slokas 21—26 say :—"When Sisupala was thus talking, the high-souled slayer of Madhu (Krishna) pondered in his mind on the discus that humbled the pride of the Daityas. As soon as the discus came into his hands, that skilful speaker, the high-souled Krishna thus loudly spoke, "O rulers of earth, hear why this man has been hitherto pardoned by me. Asked by his mother I promised to pardon his one hundred offences. This was the boon that she asked of me and this was the boon that I granted her. O kings, that number has now become full. I shall now kill him in the presence of the kings." Having said this, the chief of the Yadu race, that chastiser of foes, Krishna immediately cut off in anger with his discus the head of the Chedi king. That heavy armed hero fell like a cliff struck by thunder. The kings saw a fearful effulgence from the body of the Chedi king, issuing like that of the sun in the sky. That effulgence then adored the lotus-eyed Krishna, ever worshipped by all the worlds ; and it then entered Krishna's body."

But in Udyoga Parva, Chap. XXII., Slokas 27-29 we find king Dhritarashtra thus describe the incident. "Formerly in the Rajsuya sacrifice, the kings of Chedi, Karusha, and also other rulers of earth assembled with innumerable warriors. Amongst them all, the Chedi king was most powerful ; he was the greatest bowman, an invincible warrior in battle. Within a short time the exalted Krishna defeated him and damped the courage of the other kings. Seeing the lion-like Krishna on his chariot, the kings that followed the rulers of the Karushas in honouring the Chedi king, fled in fear like so many deer. When they escaped, Krishna easily killed Sisupala, and thus enhanced the glory of the Pandavas." Of the two accounts we have accepted the more reasonable one.

Undisturbed and unobstructed the great sacrifice was completed. The invited guests began to disperse. The ancient chronicler goes on to say :—"Thereupon all the kings came to the virtuous Judhishthira and said, "Sire, you have grown in prosperity through good fortune. You have now acquired the imperial dignity. The fame of the Ajamira* race has been greatly increased by you. You have acquired great religious merit by this act. O best of kings, we tell you that we have been welcomed and received by you to our hearts' content. We now desire to return to our own kingdoms. Give us permission to go." Having heard what they said, the virtuous Judhishthira worshipped them as each deserved and then commanded his brothers thus : "All these kings have come to us of their own accord. They are now desirous of returning to their kingdoms. Escort them to the confines of our dominions."

When they were all gone, Krishna came to Judhishthira and said, "Sire, with your permission I shall now go to Dwarka." "O Krishna," replied the king, "through your grace I have performed this great sacrifice. Through your grace all the kings have come under my sway. O sinless One, how can I give you permission to go ? But I know you must return to your own city."

Krishna then went to his aunt Kunti and said, "Your sons have assumed the imperial dignity. They have obtained vast wealth. Be pleased with all this. With your permission I shall now return to Dwarka." He then bade farewell to Draupadi and Subhadra. Then coming out of the inner apartment, he performed his ablution and daily rites of worship, the Brahmans

* Ajamira was one of the ancestors of the Kuru kings.

uttering benedictions. Daruka* then brought his chariot. The high-souled and lotus-eyed Krishna walked round it, and then ascended it, and started for the city of Daravati."†

* Daruka was the charioteer of Krishna.

† See Mahavarata, Sava Parva, Chap. XLV., slokas 52-62.

CHAPTER IX.

LIFE IN DWARKA.

THE cow-herd boy of *Vrindavana* had now become the greatest of all men in India. He had been adored and worshipped by innumerable men as a great prophet,—a supernatural being,—nay* the Supreme One Incarnate. Living in distant Dwarka in his city on the sea, Krishna ruled over the hearts of the Aryan land.† The greatest heroes and the most powerful potentates had bowed down their heads before his great prowess and supreme statesmanship ; the most illustrious Rishis and sages, learned scholars and great ascetics had all given him the first place for his supernatural intelligence, his wonderful learning, his great piety,—his superhumanity in everything. The masses had been carried away by an indescribable love for him,—the love the reason whereof they did not know.‡ The sinful were terribly afraid of him,—the pious were his loving devotees. A new thought, a new religion, a new happiness now rolled over the land of the Aryans from one end to other.

The rule of such tyrants as Kansa, Sisupala, Jarasandha and others had been replaced by that of such a pious and virtuous ruler as Yudhisthira. The little

* Bhishma was the greatest man of that age. We have seen that even he considered Krishna to be an incarnation of the Supreme Being.

† See Mahavarata, Udyoga Parva, Chapter XXXIV., Slokas 10-29.

‡ See Vagavata, Skanda X, Chap. 60th, Sloka 20.

kingdom of love and devotion, beauty and sublimity, that Krishna founded in the beautiful forests of *Vrindavana* had now extended far and wide,—from the snow-capped Himalayas in the north to the dense forests in the south, from the Vrisni city of Dwarka in the west to Bhis-maka's great kingdom in the east.

He was a great mystery to all, but all the same the people loved him with all their hearts. They worshipped and adored him, they feared and respected him, they called him God, preceptor, father, protector, and friend.

But what sort of life did Krishna himself lead? He was the greatest warrior who had defeated all others; he was the most powerful general, commanding the mighty army of the Gopas; he was the greatest statesman, the adviser of the great king Judhithira and all the monarchs of *Aryavarta*; he was the great diplomat who had brought all the quarrelling Aryan chiefs under one pious Emperor, thus bringing in peace and happiness to the millions of persecuted and down-trodden men; he was the greatest of all learned men, whom the great Rishis revered; he was the great religious teacher who had introduced a wonderful religion amongst the Aryan races, thereby raising them to the highest degree of civilisation; he was the great centre from which flowed all love, all beauty and sublimity, happiness and bliss. But he himself led a very simple life. He said, "I am indifferent alike to my home and body. I am happy in my own self."* Living always

* What did Krishna mean by "I am happy in my own self?" *Chhandagya Upanishada* says:—He, who seeing this, thinking this, believing this, is deep in his own self, who sports with his own self, whose friend and companion is his own self, whose self is his only pleasure, is the king of himself."

in the whirlpool of worldly affairs, he was the greatest ascetic that was ever born in the world. He was a Master over Matter as well as Spirit. He ruled over both, and therefore he was superhuman. Wherever he lived, it was a land of joy and merriment*, and wherever he went, people felt an indescribable bliss and happiness. He had maddened whole India, as he once did the little *Vrindavana* and Mathurah.

He was Nature personified. He was as high, stern, hard and majestic as the Himalayas; he was as humble, soft, sweet and sublime as the *Jamuna*. He was as fearful as the roaring tempest, cracking the tallest trees; he was as lovely and charming as the sweet moon-beam playing on the blossoming plants. What was he? The men that saw him did not know him,—how could we?

Thus did he live in Dwarka,—the greatest Man of all men living. Adored and worshipped by all,—universally loved and feared, respected and obeyed, his was a towering personality,—a wonderful man among men; but yet he was a great Mystery,—none could understand him, nor his works, nor his teachings, nor what and who he was. This is all that we know of him for thirteen long years.† But the Kingdom of Righteousness had not been

* See Harivansa, Vishnu Parva, Chap. 144.

† There is virtually no history of Krishna for the space of thirteen years,—the period Judhishthira and his brothers passed in exile. Mahavarata being not his history, the author has almost written nothing about him when the Pandavas were roving in the wood. The accounts of their wanderings have been given in the Vana Parva of the Mahavarata. Almost whole, or we may very well say, the entire Vana Parva that we now possess is an after-interpolation. A little careful study will show it,—so different is the style of writing, the form of narration,—the modern touch of the language.

as yet founded. The Great Religion had **not** been as yet preached,—the vicious and the sinful had not been as yet swept off the face of the earth,—piety and virtue, happiness and bliss alone did not as yet rule over the

We meet Krishna three times in the Vana Parva. (1) He with the other Vrisnis came to see the Pandavas on hearing their exile. Krishna gives here an account of his war with Salya who had a car that floated in the sky. It is altogether an extraordinary, and we may add, a ridiculous story and can by no means be taken seriously. (2) We see him again. The wrathful Rishi Durvasha with ten thousand disciples were mischievously sent by the wicked Durjodhana to the forest-abode of the Pandavas. He thought the Pandu princes would not be able to feed in the forest Durvasha with ten thousand disciples, and the result would be that they would be burnt down through the angry Rishi's curse. The Rishi appeared when the Pandavas had nothing to feed him and his followers. Draupadi in this dire distress piteously prayed to Krishna to come and save the Pandavas. Krishna came as soon as thought of. He ate only a portion of a thing that lay in the corner of the cooking pot in which Draupadi had cooked. By his doing this, Durvasha and his ten thousand pupils, who had gone to bathe, felt their stomach so heavy that they thought they were quite incapable of eating even a morsel more. They therefore did not return to the Pandavas, but went away to another direction. (3) We meet Krishna once more. Some colloquys follow, but there is nothing important in them.

This is all the history that we get of Krishna in the Mahavarata during the period the Pandavas were in exile. We have already said, the accounts that Vishnu Purana, Harivansa, Vagavata and other Puranas give are so palpable fictions that they can by no means be taken into serious account. They say many things no doubt, but they are all of the order an example of which we give below.

Once upon a time Satyabhama, one of the wives of Krishna, saw the celestial flower *Parijata* and longed to possess some. Krishna went to heaven, and fought with Indra, the king of heaven. After defeating him, he presented innumerable *Parijatas* to his wife.

They also give the accounts of many wars that Krishna waged and the many battles that he fought. We have mentioned some of them in vol. I, page 74.

But we must mention here that at this time Krishna had become a father. His eldest son was named Pradumna. But the Puranas say that he had many thousands of sons from his many hundreds of wives. They also mention that one of his sons Samva married the daughter of Durjodhana. See our note in page 69-70, Vol. I.

world, Krishna had still much to do, and quietly and silently did he work to this end.

As soon as he turned his back towards Dwarka, the good king Yudhisthira was challenged to a game of dice by his jealous cousin Duryodhana, who could not bear the sight of his prosperity. He consulted with his wicked brothers and more wicked uncle Sakuni. There was no chance of robbing great Yudhisthira of his imperial dignity by an open war; they, therefore,—sinful as they were,—conspired to win his wealth and empire by a trick. They challenged him to a game of dice.

Yudhisthira was defeated at every step.* He lost all his wealth,—all his imperial treasures, his kingdom and empire,—nay finally his loving brothers, his beloved wife and even himself. He got back his brothers and wife by agreeing to go to exile for thirteen years and by vowing that the last year of it he would remain unrecognised and undiscovered. If his whereabouts were in any way known, he would again go to exile for thirteen years.

The king, who only recently assumed the imperial dignity by performing the great Rajsuya sacrifice now left his magnificent city of Indraprastha in the ascetic garb, followed by his loving brothers and beloved wife Draupadi,—all the people weeping aloud at their departure. The great structure that Krishna had built crumbled down as soon as he turned his back. He heard of the disaster that had befallen the Pandavas and

* In ancient India, the Aryan warriors considered it to be the greatest cowardice to decline when challenged either to a fight or play. Yudhisthira, though very weak in the game of dice, had no other alternative but to accept the challenge.

went to see them ; they were then living in the deep forest. He went twice more to see them during the long period of their exile. The great Judhisthira, the embodiment of truth, passed through this ordeal,—his terrible thirteen years' exile,—in the direst misery, but he kept his word.

CHAPTER X.



THE END OF EXILE.

THIRTEEN long years had passed away. The Pandavas had been able to escape the vigilance of the Kurus and to remain unrecognised and undiscovered in the thirteenth year of their miserable exile.* They had passed the year as the menial servants of the king of Birata.†

On the last day of the stipulated period, Judhishthira had introduced himself to the Birata King as the Pandava monarch of Indraprastha. He and his brothers and their ever beloved queen, Draupadi, had been most cordially welcomed. They had been received with all possible respect and honour. The king had made Judhishthira sit on his throne, and the fact was proclaimed all over the country.

The king of Birata had then pressed that his daughter Uttara might be accepted as a gift. She was a princess as beautiful as beauty itself; she was most accomplished and highly gifted; she was as simple and innocent as a child. The king Judhishthira had accepted the loving

* After passing twelve years in different woods, they lived the thirteenth year in the city of the Birata King in different disguises. We need not say that they met with various adventures. One Parva of the Mahavarata, namely the Birata Parva, is devoted to the narration of these adventures. There is no mention of Krishna in this Parva except that he came to attend the marriage of his nephew Abhimanyu.

† Judhishthira was the king's gentleman-in-waiting, Bhima the cook, Arjuna the dancing master of the king's daughter, Nakula, the keeper of horses, and Sahadeva that of the cattle. Draupadi was the queen's handmaid.

present of their kind host, and he had agreed to marry her with his beloved nephew Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna.*

The marriage was in due time solemnised in great pomp and grandeur. All the friends and relatives of the Pandavas came to attend the festivities. The Vrisnis with their head Krishna and Rama, and the Panchalas with their head the old king Drupada and his most heroic son, Dhristadumna, came and made the kingdom of Birāt resound with their joyous shouts.

When the festivities were over, the thought of the Pandavas' getting back their kingdom was naturally uppermost in everybody's mind. One day in full court Krishna thus addressed the friends, relatives, and allies of the Pandavas.† "It is known to you all how king Judhishthira was defeated by Sakuni by a trick in a game of dice, how he was robbed of his kingdom and how he was exiled. The Pandavas have fulfilled their austere vow to live in exile for thirteen years. Therefore now consider what is best for Judhishthira and also for Durjodhana. Consider what is right, suitable, and calculated to redound to the glory of the illustrious Kurus. The virtuous king Judhishthira does not want even the kingdom of heaven by wrongful means. He would rather prefer rightful possession of a single village. King Judhishthira with his friends wishes all prosperity to the Kurus. The intentions of Durjodhana are not known to us; therefore let a virtuous, holy, noble-born and wileless man go as

* Abhimanyu was the only son of Subhadra, the wife of Arjuna and sister of Krishna. He was at this time about sixteen years of age. As he was a pupil of Krishna in arms,—young as he was,—he was a great warrior.

† See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chap. I.

an ambassador to the Kuru king. Let him persuade the Kurus to give the Pandavas half of the kingdom they possessed.*

Rama said, "When the heroic sons of our aunt Kunti are willing to forego half of their kingdom, the sons of Dhritarastra should give up the half. I should be glad if some one were to go to the Kurus and bring about good feelings amongst the Kurus and the Pandavaṣṣ."

Then spoke Satyaki.† He was for war,—war pure and simple. He exclaimed, "They won Yudhishthira's kingdom by a trick ; how can prosperity attend such scoundrels ? Why should the Pandavas approach them in a humiliating spirit ? Let us march against them with our armies and inflict on them the punishment they so well deserve."

Then old Drupada spoke. He said, "In my opinion the suggestion of Rama is not appropriate. The son of Dhritarastra ought by no means to be addressed in a conciliatory spirit. I think it is impossible to bring the ill-natured Durjodhana to reason by peaceful means. Let us therefore make preparations and send word to our friends to collect armies. And let my priest, this learned

* The hero of the Udjoga Parva is Krishna ;—he is all through its chapters. We cannot say that the entire Udjoga Parva is an after-addition, for if there is no Udjoga Parva, the remaining Parvas of the Mahavarata become meaningless. If the battle was really fought, some preparations and negotiations must have been made and carried on by both the contending parties just before it. Therefore we are bound to accept much of the Udjoga Parva as matters based on facts. But interpolations are also too often met with. We shall point out as we proceed what we reject. We shall try, however, to adhere to the original descriptions as much as possible.

† Satyaki was a great Vrisni warrior, nearly related to Krishna. He learned the science of arms from Krishna, and therefore he and Abhimanyu were next to Arjuna in the art of archery.

Brahman, go to Durjodhana and tell him the views of the king Yudhisthira."

"Our relations with the Kurus and the Pandavas," said Krishna, "are the same. We have come here invited for the wedding. The ceremony being now over, we shall go back to our own homes. If the sons of Dhritarastra do not seek peace, then summoning all others, last of all send word to us."*

The invited chiefs parted. King Drupada's priest went to the Kuru court. Messengers were sent round to all the chiefs and potentates to come to the aid of the Pandavas. Preparations were being made on all sides,—for everybody knew that the Kurus would not part with even an acre of land without a mortal struggle.†

* It is quite evident that Krishna was all along for peace. His words plainly meant that he would have nothing to do with the coming struggle. His words indicate he preferred to be let alone in his island city.

† The dialogues are long, but we have given them in brief. See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapters I. to V.

CHAPTER XI.

KRISHNA AS CHARIOTEER.

THE mission of Drupada's priest had failed: Durjodhana had declared that he would not part with a single village, not to speak of half the kingdom. He too had sent word to his allies and friends to collect their armies and to join him in the plains of Kurukshetra.* He made every preparation to give the Pandavas a warm reception.

Whole India was in a stir. The chiefs and potentates from the remotest corner of the vast Aryan land hastened to join either the Pandavas or the Kurus. It was in fact a struggle between the heroic Panchalas, who stood by the five Pandavas, and the great Kurus who followed the standard of their proud prince Durjodhana.

The two clans were hereditary enemies. Nothing could have given the Panchalas more pleasure than an invasion of the Kuru-country. The Kurus at the same time took the greatest pleasure in taking fire and sword into their enemy's vast dominions. Hardly was there any chance of these two clans' coming to a peaceful settlement. The Pandavas were willing for peace,—for it was not pleasant for them to fight against their own kith and

*. The field of Kurukshetra lies north of Delhi. It is a great Hindu pilgrimage.

kin, but the Panchalas were not. They could not forget the insult that was heaped by the wicked Durjodhana and his brothers on their most beloved princess Draupadi.* They could not rest satisfied unless they saw the blood of those that insulted their king's daughter. Thus war became inevitable ; and both parties girded up their loins to engage in a mortal struggle on the plains of Kurukshetra.

But both the contending parties were eager to know what course Krishna would adopt in the ensuing struggle. They all knew that victory would declare to those with whom the great Krishna would side with his tremendous discus.† Both were eager to secure him and his invincible Gopa army. Therefore Arjuna and Durjodhana both hastened to Dwarka. We shall now quote the ancient chronicler.

“The two Kuru chiefs, Arjuna and Durjodhana, having reached Dwarka, found Krishna asleep. Durjodhana came first and sat down on the excellent seat that stood near the head of the Vrisni prince. Then came Arjuna. He sat down on the floor near his feet. Krishna, having awakened, first saw the Pandu prince, and then the great Kuru prince. He welcomed them both and did them due honour. He then asked the cause of their coming. ‘It is befitting,’ said Durjodhana, ‘that you should lend me your help in this war,

* See Mahavarata, Sava Parva.

† Discus is the emblical weapon of God Vishnu whose incarnation Krishna is said to be. But it appears that the chief weapon of Krishna was a discus,—a circular steel instrument with sharp edges all round,—often used by the Aryan warriors. The warrior who used it whirled it on his finger and then threw it at an enemy. Krishna's discus appears to have been a tremendous weapon of offence.

for your friendship with myself and with Arjuna is equal. Our relationship with you also is similar. Besides I have come to you first. From the days of yore good men have befriended him who was first to come. You, O Krishna, are the best and the greatest man in the world. You should act according to the ordinance.'

'I have not the slightest doubt,' replied Krishna, 'that you came here first ; but as Arjuna has been first seen by me, I shall help you both. The sacred books say that younger persons should be helped before their elders ; therefore, I think I must give Arjuna the first chance to ask help from me. I have two offers to make to you, namely, there is my large army of Gopas, each of whom is capable of slaying me ; they are known by the name of Narayanas and they are invincible in battle. Let them be the army of one party, and let myself who have resolved not to wield arms in this battle go to the other party. O Arjuna, decide either according to your liking.'

The Pandu prince submissively said, 'O Krishna, I choose you. Let us have you,—armed or unarmed.' 'Yes', exclaimed Durjodhana in joy, 'I have no objection. Let me have your great army.'

Durjodhana then went to Rama. 'O great king,' said Valadeva, 'I have resolved neither to help the Kurus nor the Pandavas in this battle. I shall remain neutral. You are born of the great Bharata tribe,—go and fight in strict accordance with the rules of honour and war.'

Then Durjodhana went to the other chiefs of Dwarka. Some took his side and some that of Arjuna.

The great Kritavarma* with his stupendous army went over to his side, but the invincible Satyaki and his army followed Arjuna.

Durjodhana having departed, Krishna said to Arjuna, "Knowing that I shall not take any part in the battle, why have you chosen me?" "O foremost of men," replied Arjuna, "I know you can alone slay them all. I too am alone able to do it. You are already the most illustrious, but I am still a seeker after fame. Therefore I shall destroy them without the help of your all-destroying arms." "O friend," said Krishna, "what can I do for you in this battle?" "It has been my desire," said Arjuna, "to make you my charioteer. You should fulfil this my desire." "Very well," replied he, "I shall be your charioteer in this battle."†

* Kritavarma was a great Bhoja warrior.

† See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter VII.

CHAPTER XII.



SANJAYA'S EMBASSY.

THE Panchalas with their head the great king Drupada and their illustrious prince Dhristadyumna with all their allies and friends, accompanied by innumerable other chiefs and potentates with their powerful armies, encamped at Upaplavya*, a place near the plains of Kurukshetra. Each and every one of that seven *Akhyauhinis* of warriors was determined to fight to his utmost, so that the good and the virtuous Pandavas might be placed on the throne of their ancestral kingdom.

The old blind king Dhritarastra grew greatly alarmed. Though he knew that his sons had collected a larger army,—a stupendous army of eleven *Akhyauhinis*,—yet he was awfully afraid of Bhima, Arjuna, and Krishna.† An indescribable terror seized him. He had a misgiving that the extinction of the great Kuru race was at hand.

The old and weak-minded Kuru king, too fond of his sinful sons, unable to persuade them to give up the just dues to the Pandavas, thought of stopping this sanguinary war and of saving the lives of his sons by taking advantage of the piety and goodness of the good and virtuous Yudhisthira. He sent Sanjaya to Upaplavya, asking him to induce Yudhisthira to abandon the idea of battle, by pointing to the great sin that is

* Upaplavya was a small village near the field of Kurukshetra.

† See Mahavarata, Udyoga Parva, Chapter XII, Slokas 9 to 28, Dhritarastra's speech.

always incurred in war and blood-shed, in the slaughter of fellow-men and in the ruin of innumerable homes.

Sanjaya came and was welcomed by the Pandavas in all honour and respect. He then, inquiring after the health of all, thus addressed the Pandava king. "We can not know beforehand what befalls a man. For this reason, O son of Pandu, have you met with very great troubles? You will no doubt by means of your great wisdom make up for all of them. You will surely so make it up that there will be peace amongst the Kurus and the Panchalas. A mean act does not befit you. If you act meanly, it will be like a black spot on a white cloth. Who will perform an act which will cause the destruction of all and lead men to hell. Blessed are those that promote the interests of their cousins. If after subjugating the Kurus and defeating all, you destroy those who despise you, then the remaining portion of your life will be no better than death. What is life after killing your own cousins? I do not find the slightest good, O great king, in your victory or defeat. Why should the Pandavas do a wicked act like the mean people? With folded hands I throw myself under your protection, that there may be peace amongst the Kurus and the Panchalas."

"What words of mine, O Sanjaya," replied Yudhis-thira, "have ever meant war? Having secured peace, who ever wished for wars? O Sanjaya, I am always ready to make peace as you ask me. Let Indraprastha be my kingdom. Let the revered king of the Kurus give it back to me."

"That you are attached to virtue," said Sanjaya,*

* We would ask our readers to carefully read the speech of Sanjaya, for it will hereafter enable them to better understand the

"is well-known to all. But the life that is full of great deeds is also mortal. Knowing this, you should not bring about the destruction of the Kurus, even if they do not give back your kingdom. In my opinion to live as a beggar is better than to possess a kingdom obtained by means of war. As a man's life lasts but for a short time, as it is ever subject to sufferings, and as it is unstable and mortal, you should never commit a sin. *Kama* (desire) is the source of all impediments to virtue. Thirst for wealth is the great bond of the world. The man, who desires pleasures, becomes degraded for the sake of pleasures. A man who makes virtue his chief object of life gains great fame in this life and shines like the sun in the next. A sinful man, even if he obtains the earth, is a ruined man both here and hereafter. You have read the Vedas, you have practised the hard austerities of *Bramhacharjya*, you have performed great sacrifices, you have kept the other world always before your mind, you should not now commit a sin. O Judhisthira, even in the next world, there is no absolute annihilation either of the virtuous or vicious deeds. The deeds performed here bear fruit in the next world. If actuated by the desire of possessing wealth and kingdom, you wage a war now, in vain you have then so long led such a pure, holy, and virtuous life. Only an unwise and sinful man obtains prosperity by fighting. A wise and virtuous man rather

religion of Srikrishna. They will find that he preached before the Pandava king a religion which is akin to those that still are the most favoured religions of the world. He preached the religion of forgiveness, goodness, piety and virtue *at all times and conditions and in all circumstances without any deviation whatsoever*. But Krishna also preached a religion of forgiveness, goodness, piety and virtue, but with a great *proviso*. This is the grandest aspect of his grand religion. See his speech in the next chapter.

loses his prosperity than obtains it by fighting. Your instinct does not urge you to commit a sin. Therefore do not through anger commit a sinful act. Anger is the cause of all sins. It ought to be controlled by all means. O king, control your wrath; do not flood the earth with human blood. After killing your grandfather, uncle, brothers, cousins, relatives and friends, and after raising heart-rending lamentations of millions of women all over India, what pleasure would you be able to enjoy, though you will be then the lord of the earth? Having obtained even the whole world, will you be able to rid yourself of decrepitude or death? If you are desirous of committing this sin, simply because your advisers wish it, then abdicate everything to them and go away. You should not forsake the path of virtue.* "Undoubtedly, O Sanjaya," replied Judhishthira, "as you say. But you must first know whether it is the path of virtue or vice that I am following in waging this war. Krishna is the lord of virtue, he is vastly learned in all the sciences and learning. Let good Krishna say if I am to blame in not making peace. I shall not act against his advice."

* Mahayarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter XIII to XXVIII.

CHAPTER XIII.

KRISHNA AND SANJAYA.

“O SANJAYA,” said Krishna,* “I always desire long life, prosperity and good of the Pandavas as well as of the king Dhritarastra with all his sons. I desire, that there should be peace between the Kurus and the Pandavas. I never give them any other advice. King Yudhisthira, I know, is ever for peace. But the great king Dhritarastra and his sons are very avaricious,—it is, therefore, difficult to establish peace between them and the Pandavas. It is no wonder, under the circumstances, that their quarrel should daily grow bitter.

* This is the first time that our readers meet Krishna in this little book, giving out his views about religion and morals. We have said that he founded a religion, and we have also said that he preached it. We have added that his grand religion was the main cause of his being considered as not only the first man in India but as the Supreme One incarnate. But neither Vishnu Purana nor Harivansa gives any instance in which he gives out his religious views, except in isolated lines, or except where he led the Gopas to perform the hill-sacrifice. Vagavata in its eleventh Book gives an elaborate dialogue between Krishna and Udhya —a long sermon on religion, philosophy, and theology delivered by Krishna. It is a wonderful sermon,—unequalled by the religious teachings in any other works. We shall speak more about it when later on we come to deal with the teachings of Srikrishna.

In the Mahavarata we often meet with instances in which Krishna gives out his views on religion and morals. The most important of them all is the celebrated Gita,—his sermon to Arjuna just before the battle of Kurukshetra. We meet with many passages in the Adi and Sava Parvas, from which we can glean his views, but for the first time we meet in the Udjoga Parva one or two of his long lectures on religion and morals. His reply to Sanjaya is a case in point. It covers 58 Slokas of Chapter XXIX., Udjoga Parva. We have, however, given only the gist of his views. The readers will mark the difference between the religious views of Sanjaya and those of Krishna.

You know, O Sanjaya, what *Dharma** is. Then why do you find fault with king Yudhisthira, who is ever ready to perform his duty ?”

“Somesay ‘ Knowledge ’ is the way to salvation and others say ‘ Work ’† is the way to it. But, O Sanjaya, as without eating hunger is never satisfied, so only Knowledge minus all Works can produce no result. As thirst is instantly quenched by drinking water, so such works should be performed in this world the results of which can be immediately perceived. Behold, O Sanjaya, wind blows through work and sun causes day and night through work. The sleepless moon rises in the sky, fire burns, and the earth carries weights all through work. Work is supreme in Nature. If this be the case, if man must work,—if he is bound (by Nature) to act, should he not perform what *ought* to be performed ?‡ You know the duties of every order of men, why do you then plead the cause of the Kurus ? The duty of a king is to protect his kingdom and his subjects, to make donations to the pious men, and to support all the poor and the helpless, to study the Vedas, to perform great sacrifices, to take to wife, and to lead a purely virtuous life. A bad king will not observe all these. He will be desirous of obtaining the wealth of others, will grow inhuman and turn to be a tyrant. A thief who steals wealth unseen and one who robs by force are both equally sinful. What difference is

* See our note in Vol. II., page 21.

† These two words are used to explain the two celebrated Sanskrit words, *Jnana* and *Karma*. The latter word is sometime translated by “action.” We shall deal with them elaborately later on.

‡ All this has been elaborately dealt with in the Gita. See Vol. III., this work.

there, I ask, O Sanjaya, between Durjodhana and a thief? The sons of Dhritarastra robbed the Pandavas of their just inheritance and thus set at naught the duties of kings. Should not a robber be punished? Should that which is ours be allowed to be taken away by others? Under the circumstances would it be not praiseworthy to be killed while fighting?"

"Then again look at their conduct in the Council-hall. They forcibly brought before the court the beloved wife of the Pandavas, the blameless Panchala princess, Draupadi. They heaved over her the grossest insults, they dragged her by her hair, they attempted to undress her, they called her to sit on their laps, they insulted her in every possible way; and none, not the old king, not even Bhishma, except good Vidura, raised his voice in her defence. Are not the Pandavas morally bound to make an attempt to inflict just punishment on the insulters of their wife?"

Krishna smilingly added, "You did not, O Sanjaya, speak a word when Draupadi was being insulted before you. You now preach morality to the Pandavas!"

He then turned towards the Pandavas and said, "I wish to go to the Kurus and make an attempt to bring about a settlement. I hope the sons of Dhritarastra will listen to me when I shall speak to them words of wisdom based on virtue and humanity." Then turning to Sanjaya he said, "I hope the Kurus will treat me with respect when I shall go amongst them."

"After bidding adieu to all," said Sanjaya, "I shall now go away. Pardon me if any harsh words have fallen from my lips. Let happiness and prosperity be yours."

“Adieu, O learned man,” said Judhisthira, “do not think ill of us. Let there be peace between ourselves and our cousins. Give us but five villages, and we shall be satisfied. Thus let there be peace ; let brothers follow brothers and fathers unite with sons ; let the Panchalas meet the Kurus with smiling faces. O Sanjaya, tell them I am ready for peace ; I am also prepared for war. War or peace lies with them.”*

* This chapter is culled from Chap. XXIX. to Chap. XXXI.

CHAPTER XIV.



KRISHNA AND THE PANDAVAS.

ON the extensive field of Upaplavya lay encamped the great Panchala army * As far as eye could see, innumerable canvas-sheds were seen as so many swans on the blue water of a lake. Chiefs and potentates from the furthest end of the Aryan land with their countless soldiers, with thousands of horses, elephants and chariots, had their tents all around the ever heroic Panchala army. In the midst of them all, stood the magnificent camp of the Pandavas. Each and every one of those seven *Akhyahaunies* of warriors panted to rush upon the wicked Kurus and to flood the earth with their blood.†

But there was one amongst those innumerable men who stood ready to start for Hastinapur to meet the Kurus and to make a last attempt to bring them to their senses and to secure peace amongst the Panchalas and the Kurus, and thus to prevent the extermination of the Aryan races. Krishna stood ready to start, but the Pandavas were not willing that he should go into the camp of the enemy.‡ “It is not my wish,

* Between the Chap. XXI., the departure of Sanjaya, and Chap. LXXII., the conversations between the Pandavas and Krishna, there are no less than fifty long chapters, but they are so palpable interpolations that we can very well reject them. Besides there is nothing in them important in respect of the career of Srikrishna.

† See the end of Udjoga Parva and the beginning of Bhishma Parva.

‡ These speeches are long. As they have no historical value, we give them in brief.

O Krishna," said Judhisthira, "that you should go to the Kurus. Though you speak in a most friendly manner, Durjodhana will not listen to you. In my opinion, O Krishna, it is not proper for you to go into the midst of our enemies." "O great king," replied Krishna, "I know the vicious nature of the sons of Dhritarashtra, but you need not feel any anxiety for me. My going will not be without results ;—at least we shall not be blamed by others that we did not desire for peace till the last."

"As you please, O Krishna," said Judhisthira. "May all good come out of it ! May you return in health and with success ! You know us and you know our enemies. You know what would be to our good and you know also what to say. You are my beloved brother and dear friend ; establish such peace amongst the Bharatas that we may all live in contentment." "O great king," replied Krishna, "A life-long practice of *Bramhachariya* (asceticism) is not the proper course of life for a warrior. A warrior should not gain his livelihood by begging. Victory or death in a battle has been ordained to a warrior by the Father of the Universe. Therefore you should never show a humiliating spirit. You will never obtain your just rights if you have a humiliating spirit. Therefore, O great king, show your prowess and conquer your enemies. Let all your soldiers be prepared for battle and let them be careful about their horses, elephants, and chariots. O great king, collect together all that ought to be kept ready for battle. I shall look into their intentions. Observing their army and preparations, I shall return. I shall try my best to bring about peace. But I anticipate war by all means."

Then he looked at Bhima, who said, "O Krishna, speak in such a way as there may be peace amongst the Kurus. Do not frighten them with the prospect of war. Resentful, wrathful, and vain, Durjodhāna should be treated with courtesy. We would rather, O Krishna, follow the lead of Durjodhāna and be under his control, but let not the Kuru race be annihilated. I say this with the approval of the king. Arjuna is kindness itself, he is never for war." "How is it," said Krishna, "O great hero, that you now desire peace,—you who have passed thirteen long years, vowing destruction to Durjodhāna and others? Does your heart tremble with fear? Are you filled with despair?"

"You regard me," replied Bhima, "in a different light. I am exceedingly in a cheerful mood at the prospect of war. And you know very well my prowess. I have no fear from all the worlds enraged against me. But I am showing good will out of mercy. I am prepared to bear all hardships, if the great Kuru race is not annihilated."

"O great hero," replied Krishna, "I know the greatness of your soul. I know also what prowess you possess. I do not find fault with you."

"O Krishna," said Arjuna, "all that ought to be said has been spoken by the king (Judhisthira). But hearing your words, it appears to me that you do not consider peace as easily obtainable. You are the best well-wisher of both the Kurus and the Pandavas. Act in such a way as there may be peace. Whatever you will desire to do after mature deliberation will be accepted by us with all respect."

"I shall," said Krishna, "try to accomplish what would

be for the good of both the Kurus and the Pandavas. But all is not in my power. Land is tilled and watered by action, but without rain, it cannot be made to yield crops. Under such circumstances irrigation which can be done by men should be resorted to. But irrigation is impossible if draught is brought about through the divine agency. The affairs of the world are accomplished by human exertions prompted by divine Providence. I can do only that which is capable of being accomplished by human beings."*

* The conversations given above occupy eight chapters, from Chap. LXXII. to LXXIX.

CHAPTER XV.

KRISHNA AND DRAUPADI.

"O LORD," said Nakula, who was longing for war, "you have heard the words of the king who knows what righteousness is. You have heard that Bhimasena dwell on peace; you have heard what Arjuna has said, but shut your mind to all this, and do what you think proper."*

"But," exclaimed young Sahadeva, "you should act only in that way by which there shall be war. If even the Kurus desire for peace, still provoke war. How can my wrath be appeased without killing Durjodhana, who insulted the Panchala princess in the open court?"

"Sahadeva has spoken the truth," said Satyaki, "our wrath can be appeased only by killing Durjodhana. He has echoed the opinion of all the warriors present here."

His words were greeted with loud cheers from every part of that vast assembly of soldiers. They cried, "Well said, hero!" and the clatter of their arms was heard many miles away.†

Then slowly and majestically came forward the beautiful princess of Panchala, Draupadi, the queen of

* Though these speeches have no historical value, yet they give us some idea of the men whose accounts we write. They were penned by the ancient chronicler to depict the character of his work,—the men whom he personally knew. (See our remarks in the Introduction).

We are, however, giving them in brief. See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chap. LXXX.

† See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter LXXXI.

the Pandavas. She stood before Krishna. With eyes filled with tears and voice choked with grief, she then thus addressed him.* “Neither by peaceful means nor by surrender, our object will be gained. Durjodhana desires peace without returning the kingdom,—without giving even five villages that the king asked for. Therefore mercy should not be shown to him. The sin that accrues from killing one who ought not to be killed is the same as that which accrues by not killing one who ought to be killed. Durjodhana and his wicked followers deserve death ; therefore if they are not killed, great sin will touch you along with the Pandavas and the Panchalas with all their armies. I am the daughter of the king Drupada, I am the sister of Dhristadyumna, I am the daughter-in-law of the great Pandu, I am the queen of the Pandavas,—O Krishna, I am your friend,—still I was grossly insulted in the open court. Shame to the skill in archery of Arjuna ; shame to the strength of Bhimasena that Durjodhana is still alive ! If I deserve to have any favour from you, if you have any mercy for me, then, O Krishna, direct all your wrath against the wicked and sinful sons of Dhritarastra.”

The ancient chronicler adds :—“Saying this, the most beautiful Panchala princess, the lotus-eyed Draupadi, holding up her charmingly curled and deep blue coloured ringlets, which were bound up in a long beautiful brade thus spoke to Krishna.† “These tresses were seized by Dushasana ! If Bhima and Arjuna are so

* Draupadi's speech is a long one, occupying 49 Slokas of the Chap. LXXXII., of the Udjoga Parva. We have given the gist of it.

† See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chap. LXXXII., Slokas 33—38.

mean as to desire for peace, then my old father and my mighty brothers will fight with the Kurus. My five heroic sons will fight by placing Abhimanyu at their head." Draupadi burst into tears. She covered her face with her hands.

Millions of swords were immediately unsheathed, bows twanged and maces upraised,—the great Panchala army sent up such a fearful shout that in distant Hastinapur the Kurus started up from their works.

"O beautiful princess," said Krishna, "you will soon find the Kuru women weeping. They will weep as you do now, having lost their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. If the sons of Dhritarastra do not listen to my advice, they will soon be the food for dogs and jackals. I tell you truly, O princess, stop your tears, you will soon see your husbands as mighty kings as they were before. They will be endued with great prosperity and all their enemies shall be killed."

"O Krishna," said Yudhishthira, "you are the best friend of the Kurus. You are related to both parties. You are able to do what is good both for us and for the Kurus. Do what you think proper."

"I shall go," replied Krishna, "to the king Dhritarastra with the view of doing what is righteous and what is good for you and for the Kurus."

They parted, and Krishna made preparations to go to Hastinapur.*

* We must say that we have not literally translated the speeches, but we have not deviated from their import.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOURNEY TO HASTINAPUR.

THE night passed away, and the sun rose in the clear blue sky. Krishna left Upaplavya in the moment called *Maitra* under the constellation *Revati* in the month of *Kartica*.* Listening to the auspicious and holy words recited by the Brahmans and hearing the prayers of the Rishis, having performed the customary rites in the morning and worshipped the sun and the moon; having touched the tail of a bull and paid due respects to all; having gone round the fire and looked on all auspicious objects placed before him, Krishna, clad in rich costumes and adorned with holy ornaments, started for the great city of the Kurus.†

But before starting he thus addressed the great warrior Satyaki :—"Make ready my chariot and place on it my conch, my discus, my bow and arrows, and all sorts of offensive and defensive weapons. Durjodhana is wicked-minded, so are Karna and Sukani. Even a weak enemy should not be made light of by a strong man.‡

* *Kartica* is the latter end of October. *Revati* and *Maitra* are two terms in Hindu Astronomy.

† We need not say that we are quoting our ancient chronicler, the author of the Mahavarata. See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chaps. LXXXIII., to LXXXIX.

‡ All through this chapter we quote the author. Though our translation is free, yet we have rejected nothing important. Only unnecessary descriptions are dropped. This chapter will show what position Krishna held in the hearts of all classes of the people.

The car was got ready as directed. Satyaki ascended it, armed with all his weapons. Ten mighty warriors followed the prince, ready to lay down their lives to protect the life of their beloved Krishna. One thousand foot soldiers and one thousand horsemen went as rear-guard and thousand others came behind with provisions and stores.

As he proceeded, his praises were recited by thousands of Brahmans. They offered him curd, honey, clarified butter and coins. Women came out and stood by the side of the road; and as Krishna passed, they threw on him sweetly scented wild flowers. The people and the inhabitants of Upalavya came out of the city and stood on the road. As Krishna passed by, they all worshiped him in great honour.*

Passing many beautiful villages and various cities and kingdoms, he at last arrived at a place called Vrikasthala. As he neared the village, he saw many great Rishis standing on the road. He immediately alighted from his chariot and paid them due respect. "O revered Sires," said he, "does everything go on well in the world? Is piety established everywhere? What is the object of your coming here? Where are you going? What service can I render to you?"

The Rishis replied that they had come to see him and adore him. They would go to the Kuru court to hear the words of wisdom that he would speak in that magnificent assembly of kings.† Krishna took leave

* This is a nice and very true picture of the state of the Aryan society when Krishna was born. Our readers must remember that it was three thousand five hundred years ago when all the world was steeped in ignorance.

† Our readers should mark that though Krishna did not

of the great Rishis in all humility and then entered the village of Vrikasthala.

It was evening. Krishna got down from his chariot and asked Daruka to unyoke the horses ; he then performed the customary purifactory rites and evening duties.* He said to Satyaki, " We must pass the night here."

Daruka took off the trappings of the horses, and after carefully tending them according to the science, set them free. The men soon set up a tent for Krishna and prepared suitable food and drink for him. The soldiers made arrangements to pass the night as they could. Innumerable canvas-sheds were made, fires were lit, and all necessary arrangements were made to encamp for the night.

But they had hardly any need to take so much trouble to shelter themselves ; for king Dhritarashtra had built a magnificent pavilion at Vrikasthala for the reception of the great Krishna and his followers. But the Vrisni prince did not cast even a look at it ; he encamped with his men on a plain outside the village.

Such pavillions were built at every stage of Krishna's journey from Vrikasthala to Hastinapur. The foolish but wicked old king thought of wining over Krishna by a flattering reception and by the present of immense wealth.*

At last Krishna neared the great city of the Kurus.

follow the existing religion, yet he respected the feelings of others and performed all customary rites then extant. He explained this in the Gita. We shall deal with all this later on.

* This is the order that the old king issued with the hope that he would be able to win over the great Krishna to his side. Vain hope ! Mahavarata, Udgoga Parva, Chap. LXXXVI. says :—

The younger Kuru princes went out of the city to receive him. Thousands of men, women and children, some on foot and some on various conveyances, stood on the road to get a glimpse of the man for whom whole India had gone mad. The city was beautifully decorated for his reception; flags and banners floated from every house-top; conchs were blown and trumpets were sounded; again and again from the crowd tremendous shouts singing his name. As he came near by, people recited his praises by touching their heads on the ground. The chariot of Krishna could not advance on account of the pressure of thousands of his devotees who were madly eager to get a glimpse of his face.*

Slowly and with much difficulty did his chariot at last enter the magnificent court-yard of the palace of the mighty king of the Kurus. Thousands of conchs were again and again blown; they announced that the great Krishna had arrived at the court of the king of Hritarashtra.

"O Vidura, Krishna has set out from Upaplavya. He will come here in the morning. I shall present him sixteen golden chariots, each drawn by excellent horses. I shall also present him eight magnificent elephants. I shall give him one hundred handsome young maid-servants and one hundred servants. I shall present him eighteen thousand soft blankets and also thousands of deer's skins brought from China. I shall present him this very bright gem that shines day and night. My sons and grandsons, I go forward to receive the great Vrishni prince. Beautiful damsels, the best of dancing girls, will go out on foot to receive Krishna. All handsome girls that will go out to see him must go without their veils drawn. Let my subjects, men, women and children, all go out to see him. Let the city be decorated with flags and banners, let the roads through which he will pass be well watered. The house of Dushasana is better than that of Virjodhana, let it be magnificently furnished for the reception of the great Krishna."

* This is a translation of Slokas 3-8, Chap. LXXXIX, Udyoga Parva, Mahavarata.

CHAPTER XVII.



FIRST DAY IN HASTINAPUR.

AFTER traversing through the magnificent apartments of the royal abode, Krishna at last approached the great Kuru king.* Dhritarashtra with Bhishma, Drona and others rose from his seat to receive him. The old king offered him a beautiful golden seat ornamented with gems and jewels. And when Krishna took his seat, a cow, some honey and curds and water were, according to custom, offered to him. Krishna in return did all due honours to the great Kuru king and to all other revered chiefs present there. He then passed some time amongst the Kurus, jesting with some and exchanging words of courtesy with others,—with each according to his relationship with him.

With the permission of the great king, he then left the palace and went to the house of Vidura, where the mother of the Pandavas, the saintly Kunti, was living. Vidura, the best amongst the honest and the learned, honoured and worshipped him with the present of all auspicious and desirable offerings. He then accompanied Krishna to the room in which Kunti passed her days weeping for her absent sons. Seeing Krishna coming towards her, she burst into tears. She could not withhold her pent-up feelings; she wept and gave

* We are strictly following our ancient chronicler in our descriptions. See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapters LXXXIX to XCIII.

vent to bitter lamentations.* "O aunt," said Krishna, "what woman is there in the world like you? You are the wife of a hero and you are the mother of heroes; you should patiently bear happiness and misery alike, as your sons are doing. Having brought sleep, laziness, anger, joy, hunger and thirst under their control, they are ever in the enjoyment of happiness. Those mighty heroes can never rest satisfied with little. Those that are really heroes prefer to enjoy extreme happiness or to undergo extreme misery. Those only that have not been able to bring their senses under control enjoy happiness in a middle course, which is a mine of misery. The real happiness is either to rule a kingdom or to live in the forest.† Your sons and your daughter-in-law send their loving greetings to you. They are in perfect health and happiness. You will soon see, O aunt, your sons, with all their objects gained and with all their enemies killed, installed on the throne of their forefathers."‡ "You are the Saviour of the world," said Kunti, "you are the great Lord; everything depends on you. What you have said must come to pass.§"

* This lamentation occupies eighty Slokas of Udjoga Parva, Chapter XC.

† We would ask our readers to mark these great words of Srikrishna.

‡ Krishna, it is apparent, was all along aware that war was inevitable. But he still came to Hastinapur to make a last attempt to bring about peace. He came because it was his duty to come, and because success and failure were the same to him. In the Gita, Chapter II, Sloka 48, he says:—"Casting off all attachments, considering success and failure the same, perform actions."

§ It is evident Bhishma, Vidura, Kunti and many others believed Srikrishna to be the Supreme Lord in the human form.

Krishna, then bidding adieu to her, went to the palace of the great Kuru prince, Durjodhana. He saw him seated with Dushasana, Karna, Sakuni and others on excellent seats ornamented with gems and covered with costly carpets. As soon as they saw him approach, they all rose from their seats and did him all customary honours. When the great Vrishni prince took his seat, Durjodhana, after the usual exchange of courtesy, invited him to dinner. But Krishna courteously declined to accept the invitation. "For what reason," asked Durjodhana, "the eatables, drinks, garments and beds which have been provided for you, do you not accept? Devoted as you are to the good of both parties in this impending struggle, you ought to treat them equally."

"O prince," replied Krishna, "those ambassadors only who have gained their objects can take their food from those to whom they come. After gratifying my wishes, you can entertain me with all my followers." "It is not befitting," said Durjodhana, "that you should behave in this unjust way. We have no enmity with you; we are friends and relatives; therefore whether your objects are gained or not, you should accept our invitation." "O great king," replied Krishna, "I never abandon *Dharma* from desire or wrath or hate, or from the object of gaining my objects, or for the sake of argument, or from covetousness, or from any thing else. One can eat another's food when he is pleased with him, or one can do it when he is in distress. O king, neither do you please me, nor am I in distress."

Krishna then paid visits to Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, and others. They all offered to place at his disposal their houses and wealth; but Krishna courteously declined

their kind offers and came to the homely abode of the good Vidura whose invitation he accepted.*

When the dinner was over and Krishna was comfortably seated, Vidura with all due respects thus spoke to the great Vrishni prince. "O lord, you should not have come to Hastinapur. The wicked Durjodhana with his counsellors have determined not to part with even a single village. Your mission would be fruitless. I do not like your coming amongst the enemies."†

"O revered sir," replied Krishna, "you have spoken as a greatly wise man should. Knowing too well the wickedness of the sons of Dhritarashtra, I have come to Hastinapur, for he who will be able to liberate this earth, now trampled by horses, chariots and elephants,‡ from the clutches of death will earn great religious merit. Again he who does not try his utmost to serve a friend, suffering under a calamity, is called to be a cruel man by the wise. A friend should turn back a friend even by seizing his hair when he is at the point of doing an improper act. With all sincerity shall I strive to bring about the good of the sons of Dhritarashtra and Pandu,—indeed of the entire Aryan race. If Durjodhana do not listen to my words, I shall at least be satisfied with myself that I have done my duty."§

* In Udjoga Parva, Chapter XCI, Sloka 34, Krishna says :—"All these eatables are defiled by wickedness, and therefore I cannot take them. I can accept only those that have been provided by Vidura." Vidura was the poorest of the Kuru chiefs, but he was the best and the most pious and virtuous.

† Vidura's speech is a long one occupying thirty Slokas. We give only the gist of it.

‡ Krishna means the earth full of men ready to go to war and cut one another's throat.

§ Krishna's words all through the Udjoga Parva give a very fair idea of his great religion and ethics. They also tell us what a lofty character he was.

CHAPTER XVIII.

KRISHNA AND THE KURUS.

THE ancient chronicler writes:—"At break of day many sweet-voiced bards and singers awakened Krishna with their melodious music. As soon as he rose from his bed, the sounds of conchs and cymbals filled the sky. Krishna then performed all necessary rites of the morning. Having performed his ablutions and repeated the usual odes to the god of fire, he wore his ornaments and robes.*

At this time Durjodhana and Sakuni came to Krishna in order to escort him to the Kuru court. They said, "O great Vrisni prince, king Dhritarashtra with his ministers and friends are waiting for you in the court." Krishna welcomed them in courteous words and said that he was ready to go.

Before he ascended his chariot, which Daruka had kept prepared at the door, he distributed gold, clothes, cattle and horses to the Bramhans. He then went round the fire and started for the Kuru court surrounded by the Kurus and guarded by the Vrisnis. Vidura, Durjodhana, and Sakuni followed him in another car. Satyaki, Kritavarma, as also other Vrisni warriors, followed behind, some on elephants, some on horses, and others on chariots. Hundreds of mighty heroes went along surrounding the

* We quote the whole of this chapter from the original, *i.e.* Slokas 4—50, Chapter XCIV., Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata, in order to show the popularity that Krishna possessed and the great honour in which he was held. If we carefully read the Puranas, we meet with clear evidences of his great popularity,—in fact whole India was mad after him.

car of Krishna : thousand others, holding up their swords, lances and maces, followed him, shouting his praises as they proceeded. Five hundred elephants and one thousand chariots came as the rear guard of this grand procession. The great Vrishni prince having set out, there arose one continuous music of cymbals. Thousands of conchs and other musical instruments were played on all over the city.

Men, women, and children, the old and the young, had all assembled on the way by which Krishna would pass. The houses on the road-side were tottering under the load of women who had assembled in the terraces and balconies. Krishna could hardly pass through the masses of men who pressed eagerly to his car to get a glimpse of his ever-loving countenance. He slowly proceeded along, receiving loving greetings from all sides and giving suitable replies to them all.

At last he reached the gate of the assembly-hall, and his followers filled every direction with the sounds of conchs and cymbals. That assembly of thousands of kings shook with delight at the prospect of seeing the greatest of great men, the ever famous Sri Krishna. They all rose up in eagerness ; and there were confusions and uproars on all sides.

Krishna, having got down from his excellent chariot, entered the hall ; Vidura was on his one side and Satyaki on the other. In front of Krishna welcoming him, went Durjodhana and Karna ; behind him came Kritavarma and other Vrishni heroes. As soon as he came in sight, the king Dhritarashtra with Bhishma, Drona, and all others rose up from their seats. Every one present rose to pay respects to the great Vrishni prince. He too greeted all present according to their respective

age and position. With a smiling face he then took the seat which was offered to him by the great Kuru king. When he was seated, all the other kings sat down on their respective seats. Durjodhana offered an excellent seat to Satyaki, so did his younger brother to Kritavarma. Near Krishna sat Karna and Durjodhana, and not far from them sat Sakuni, the prince of Gandhara. The good Vidura sat behind Krishna on a holy seat covered with the skin of a white deer. When all sat in their respective places and silence was restored, Krishna rose from his seat and thus addressed the old blind king."

CHAPTER XIX.



KRISHNA'S SPEECHES.

"I HAVE come, O great king, so that there may be peace between the Kurus and the Pandavas.* This dynasty of yours is the best among all the royal races of *Aryavarta*. It is noted for its knowledge of the *Sastras*, as also for its good ways of life. Kindness, pain at the sight of other's distress, desire to remedy evils, humanity, sincerity, forgiveness and truth are specially prominent in the nature of the Kurus. Belonging to such a noble race, no one should do what is improper. An improper act is especially to be deplored when you are its cause. Your sons are acting impiously, setting aside all considerations of morality and goodness. This impending great disaster has its rise among the Kurus ; if not averted, it will destroy the whole earth. If you desire, you can easily avert it. Peace is not impossible to secure. Peace depends on you as well as on me. Set right your sons and I shall set the Pandavas right. Your command should be followed by your sons. It will be to their great good to act according to your orders. It will be to your good as well as that of the Pandavas if you establish peace. Let the Pandavas be your allies. United with them you will be invincible on earth ; the lordship of the entire world will be yours. In case of a war, you will be the cause of

* We quote in this chapter two speeches of Krishna,—we give a free translation. They are very long in the original, the first occupying 62 Slokas, Chap. CXV., Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata, and the second occupying 55 Slokas, Chap. CXXXIV., Udjoga Parva.

a great massacre. It will be a loss to both parties ; it will not at all be a meritorious act for you.

What feelings will you experience if the Pandavas are killed or your own sons ? Your mighty sons and the ever invincible sons of Pandu are desirous of war,—O great king, save them all from this great calamity. All the kings of the Aryan race have assembled ; they would destroy one another and the earth will be flooded with their blood,—nay the world will be destroyed ; do not be the cause of the destruction of the human race. Let all these kings with their armies, having dined and drunk together in a spirit of peace, go back to their respective kingdoms. Let the feelings of affection that you had for the Pandavas return to you. Let them be your sons as they really are. In their boyhood they lost their father, it was you who reared and brought them up. Treat them with justice as you would do to your sons. Let not your sense of virtue be lost ; let them have their just dues.

Judhisthira always follows the path of virtue. Though badly treated, yet he remained under your protection and never disregarded you. Even when the blameless princess of Panchala were dragged into the court, he did not deviate from the duty of a Kshatriya. He is still as great an embodiment of patience and forgiveness as ever. Give him his due share of his ancestral kingdom ; restrain your sons, and enjoy the blessings of life by rescuing the world from a great calamity. The sons of Kunti await your command to serve you and to fight for you,—O great king, control your wrath and be peaceful.”*

* Between Chapters CXV., and CXXIV., there are no less than 28 chapters. They contain long lectures of various Rishis

"O Krishna," replied the old king, "you have said to me what leads men to heaven, what is virtuous and just and what is beneficial to the world. But I am not my own master. Try to persuade my son, Durjodhana; he never does what is pleasing to me; he never listens to good words."

Krishna turned towards the Kuru prince and thus addressed him, "O friend, born as you are of a family of wise men, it is indeed proper that you should never do an improper act. Those that are low-born are wicked-minded, inhuman, and shameless. What you contemplate doing is done by such men only. The inclinations of honest men always tend towards virtue. Your obstinacy in this case is frightful, cruel, and wicked; it will cause a great massacre of human beings. It is thoroughly unworthy of you. O great prince, abandoning what is injurious to yourself, you should do what is beneficial to you, to your relatives, and friends. Make peace with the Pandavas, who are heroic, wise, virtuous, and learned. It would be pleasing and beneficial to your father, the great king Dhritarashtra, as also to your grandfather Bhishma, to the revered Drona, to Vidura, and to all other Kuru chiefs. My dear friend, in peace will be your good, as well as of the entire world. You are born of a great family,—be modest, humane, and wise. That man, who having received good advices from his friends does not act according to them, is sure to perish at the end. He who out of folly does not act according to such advices, than which nothing is more beneficial, does not gain his object, and is afterwards stung with remorse. He who,

and Bhishma and other Kuru chiefs to Dhritarashtra and Durjodhana. As they have nothing to do with the career of Krishna, we do not quote them.

abandoning his good advisers, acts according to the advices of evil ones meets with great dangers. What man, perhaps except you, will abandon his own kinsmen, his beloved cousins, who are great warriors, and will expect benefits from others, who are strangers? Ever since their birth the Pandavas have been persecuted by you, but they are never revengeful towards you. You should, O great prince, treat them in the same spirit. Do not show anger towards your own kinsmen, your own kith and kin. Peace with the Pandavas is more to your interest than with others. Living in peace with them, you will gain all your objects.

None of the great Kuru warriors is able to stand before Arjuna in battle. Do you see any man in your army who is able to fight with that great Pandu prince? Show me the man who will defeat the hero whose death only means your victory. It would be wanton massacre of millions of men. What advantage would that be to you?

Look at your sons, at your brothers, at your kinsmen, and other relatives. Let them not all be destroyed by your act. Let not this race of the Kurus be exterminated. Let not people say that you are the destroyer of your race.

I tell you, O great prince, those mighty warriors, the Pandavas, will establish you as the viceroy and your father, king Dhritarashtra, as the emperor. Do not, therefore, throw away the great prosperity that is about to come to you."

CHAPTER XX.



DURJODHANA AND KRISHNA.

"It is proper," said Durjodhana, "that you should speak to me in the way you do after proper considerations. You find fault with me in particular. Why do you praise the Pandavas and why do you always find fault with me without taking into your consideration the weakness and the strength of our cause? You, Vidura, the king, the preceptor, the grandfather,—all find fault with me and not with any one else. But I don't find that I am guilty of any unworthy conduct. I have not committed the slightest fault, nor do I find after a most minute and searching examination, that I have done it.

The Pandavas were defeated at a game of dice in which they engaged of their own accord. They gave their kingdom and wealth to Sakuni,—what fault of mine there could be in this matter? As a matter of fact I ordered the return of the wealth that the Pandavas lost. It is not my fault that they played again and stipulated to go to exile. What injury then have we done to them that they, united with our hereditary enemies, the Panchalas, attempt to kill us and rob our kingdom? We will not bow down our head out of fear even to Indra. (celestial king).

If I fall fighting, I shall go to heaven. The principal duty of ours, the warriors, is to lie down on a bed of arrows on the field of battle. If we fall like heroes in battle without bowing our heads to the enemy, there would be nothing to be regretted. The share of the kingdom that was most wrongly given to them

when I was a child will not be again given to the Pandavas, so long I am alive. So long this kingdom is held by me, I shall not give the Pandavas even so much land as is covered by the point of a needle."

Saying this, Durjodhana, breathing like a serpent, got up from his seat and left the assembly. His brothers headed by Dushasana, and his allies and friends headed by Karna and Sakuni also rose from their seats. Forgetting all rules of etiquette, they all left the great Kuru king.

"I find," said Krishna, "a great defect in the Kuru chiefs. They ought to stop this wicked prince by force. O great king, I consider that time has come for you to act. Imprison this foolish prince and save the Aryan race from annihilation. Kansa usurped the throne of his father and became a great tyrant. His own relatives and friends abandoned him, and he was killed by me. Abandoning one of their number for the sake of the whole race, the Yadus and the Vrishnis attained to great happiness. Imprison Karna, Sakuni, Dushasana, and Durjodhana and make them over to the Pandavas. One man should be sacrificed for the good of a whole race ; a race should be sacrificed for the good of a town ; a town should be sacrificed for the good of a community ; for the sake of one's own soul, even the whole world should be sacrificed. O great king, having imprisoned Durjodhana, make peace with the Pandavas. By your doing this, you will save the entire Khashtriya race from extermination."

The fond and foolish old king Dhritarashtra could not and dared not accept the good advices of Krishna. He made another weak attempt to induce his hot-headed son to give up the idea of battle. He summoned his queen Gandhari to the court. He told her all that had happened

and asked her to speak to her son. Vidura was sent to call upon Durjodhana to appear before the king and the queen. He came and sullenly sat down. His mother, with tears in her eyes, entreated and implored him to save the Kuru race,—nay the whole earth from destruction ; but the proud prince turned a deaf ear to all her entreaties. Treating her words with contempt he left the assembly without condescending to utter a word in reply.*

* All this covers three Chapters, CXXVI., to CXXIX., Udjoga Parva, Mahābhārata. Gandhari's lecture to Durjodhana covers 44 Slokas.

CHAPTER XXI.



PLOT AGAINST KRISHNA.

WHEN Krishna was advising the Kuru king to imprison his wicked son and thus save the extermination of the Khashtirya race, Durjodhana was also consulting with his friends to capture him and to put him in prison. He said to Karna, Sakuni and Dushasana, "Krishna wants to capture us in consultation with my old father, but let us capture him before he can induce the king to do it. If we can keep him imprisoned here, the Pandavas and the Panchalas will lose heart, they would perhaps give up the idea of battle,—if not, without Krishna they are sure to meet with defeat at our hands."

This infamous plot, the most unworthy of its kind, became known to Satyaki. He immediately said to Kritavarma, "Quickly prepare our army for action and wait with it at the door of the Council-hall." He then came to Krishna and communicated to him the intention of the Kuru prince. At the direction of Krishna he then communicated it to the old king and to all the Kuru chiefs present in the court. All were struck dumb with astonishment, fear, and shame. The idea of capturing an ambassador,—nay a guest, was more than what the Aryans of that age could think of. Again the idea of capturing Krishna, the idol and the god of all India, was more than fearful ;—all cast down their heads and remained silent.

Then did Krishna slowly rise from his seat. "O king," said he, "if through anger they can capture me by their might, let them do it. I know their prowess, and

I can cure them all of their anger at this moment. But I shall never do an act which is blamable and sinful. Your sons will lose their own wealth by coveting the wealth of the Pandavas. By their wishing to capture me they are making Judhishthira's chances of success more certain. Will it be very bad if I capture them to-day with all their followers, and hand them over to the Pandavas? But I am not inclined to do such a blamable deed which will be the result of my anger, therefore sinful. O king, let Durjodhana do what he wishes. I give him permission to do it."

"Bring immediately," cried the old blind king, "that wicked prince with his friends, his ministers, his brothers and with all his followers."

Vidura again went to Durjodhana and brought him before the king. "You are cruel, mean, and sinful," said Dhritarashtra, "united with wicked men, you want to perpetrate the most wicked deed. It is infamous and scandalous. You intend to capture Krishna who is impossible of being captured by any living beings!"

"O Durjodhana," said Krishna, "thinking me weak and alone, you intend to effect my capture by force,—it is because you have very little intelligence." Saying this Krishna laughed aloud. Then taking Satyaki and Kritavarma by hand, he left the Kuru court.

Dhritarashtra, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Vidura and others followed him to the gate. "O Krishna," said the blind king, "you have seen that I have no influence over my sons. You have seen everything; nothing has been done behind your back. I have not any wicked intentions against the Pandavas."

Addressing all, Krishna then said, "Your exalted selves were witnesses to all that had transpired in the

court. You have heard the king say that he has no influence over his sons. With your permission, therefore, I shall now go back to Upaplavya."

He bade adieu to them all and went to take leave of Kunti, the revered mother of the Pandavas. He then started for the Pandava camp. But on meeting Karna on his way, he took him up on his chariot.*

* After the speech of Krishna to Durjodhana, Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chap CXXXI., Slokas 4—15 say that he then showed his "Universal Form" to the old king and to the entire Kuru Court. This means that in his human form he showed the form of the Supreme Lord of the universe. This wonderful incident is also mentioned in the Gita of the Bhishma Parva. There again Krishna showed it to Arjuna. We shall deal with it later on when we shall come to the Gita.

But we must mention here why we have rejected this incident in this place. In the 11th chapter of the Gita, Krishna says, "Except you, none has ever before seen this (my Universal Form.)" And again in another place he says, "Except you none has by asceticism, the study of the Vedas, and the performances of sacrifices been able to see my this form." Under the circumstances we believe we are justified to say that in the Kuru Court his manifestation of his Supreme Form is but an after-addition.

See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter CXXX. to CXXXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

KRISHNA AND KARNA.

KRISHNA made another attempt to prevent this war and this great massacre of men.* Karna was the main strength of Durjodhana ; in fact depending on his matchless prowess, the proud and ambitious Kuru prince dared to pick a quarrel with the Pandavas. If he were not by him, Durjodhana would never have dared to fight with the Pandavas. He was fully aware that he had not the least chance of success, if Karna were not in his army.

The beautiful and prosperous Aryan land was on the point of destruction ; millions of men who loved him with all their hearts were almost in the clutches of death ; innumerable women who were his loving devotees were going to fill the earth with their heart-rending lamentations ; the world is going to be flooded with the human blood ; Krishna, the great and the good, made a last attempt to avert this great calamity. He took up Karna on his chariot† and spoke to him thus :—" Do you know, O Karna, who you are ? You are not the son of Athiratha and Radha ; you are the eldest son of Kunti. You were born before she was married to Pandu. The holy writs say that such sons are

* We must mention that there are no less than eight chapters between Chap. CXXXI. in which Krishna's departure from the Kuru court has been narrated and Chap. CXL. in which Krishna addresses Karna. These eight chapters contain a long story told by Kunti to Krishna. It is evidently an interpolation.

† This incident shows what a great diplomat Krishna was. If he could have induced Karna to join the Pandavas, it was certain Durjodhana would not have dared to fight.

called *Kanins*, and they have for their father the man whom their mother marries. You are, therefore, morally the son of Pandu.* Let the Pandavas know it and they will accept your feet. You being the eldest, they will joyously install you on the throne. The kings and princes, assembled at Upaplavya, will all follow you. I shall follow you with all the Bhojas and Vrishnis. Enjoy the kingdom with your loving and good younger brothers. Let your friends rejoice, and let there be brotherly feelings between you and the Pandavas.”†

“O Krishna,” replied Karna, “you have undoubtedly spoken these words out of good-will, love and friendship. I know that according to the holy writ I am the eldest son of Pandu. I know that I was born of Kunti before her marriage. But she abandoned me and never thought of me. Athiratha and Radha on the other hand reared and brought me up with all affection. They have done everything for me; they are, therefore, my parents. How can I now forsake them? I have married wives in the caste of Athiratha; I have sons and grandsons born of them. O Krishna, not for the kingship of this entire earth, nor for heaps of gold, nor for pleasure, nor owing to any fear, I can break off these ties.”

“Again, I have enjoyed sovereignty for many years under the protection of Durjodhana. Having got me on his side, he has made this preparation for war; from the fear of being killed or from the fear of being captured or from covetousness or from any thing else, I cannot behave treacherously to the son of Dhritarastra. Doubtless, O Krishna, you are speaking for my

* See our Note in Vol. I., p. 79.

† See Mahavarata, Udgoga Parva, Chapter CXL, Slokas 6-29.

good ; the Pandavas also will obey your command ; but I ask you to keep this conversation secret. I know, if the virtuous-minded and self-controlled Yudhisthira knows me to be the eldest son of Kunti, he will never agree to accept the kingdom ; and I too, if I get it, will offer it to Durjodhana. It is ordained that the Aryan race will be annihilated on the field of Kurukhetra. The Brahmans will hereafter tell the world of the great battle of the Mahavarata. Therefore, O Krishna, manage things in such a way that by falling on the field of battle we may go to heaven.”*

“You desire not then,” said Krishna, “to gain this kingdom ! The sure success of the Pandavas will then follow,—there is no doubt about it. Go then, O Karna, and tell the Kuru chiefs that this month is a charming one with plenty of food, drink, and fuel. All plants and herbs are luxuriant in their growth ; the trees are laden with fruits, the ponds are free from mud and their water is pleasant to drink. It is neither hot nor cold. In seven day’s time there will be full moon ; on that day let us engage in battle.”

“Knowing everything,” said Karna, “why do you wish to confound me and lead me to folly ? You know that the destruction of the world is near at hand.”

“This world,” replied Krishna, “will surely come to an end since my words do not seem to be acceptable to you.” “If I am alive,” said Karna, “I shall see you after this great battle. If I die, we shall meet in heaven.”†

* Karna’s speech is a long one, occupying 57 Slokas of Chapter CXLI., Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata.

† See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter CXLII to CXLIH.

Having said this Karna most affectionately embraced Krishna. He then got down from his chariot and went back to Hastinapur. Krishna retraced his steps towards the Pandava camp.*

* Our readers might say if Krishna was really eager to prevent this war, he could have easily done it by asking the Pandavas to retire. They would never have disobeyed him. Well, if he did this, it would have been giving premium to vice and sin and indulgence to wickedness. It would have been murdering justice and virtue in the world. He tried all possible means to induce Duryodhana to walk in the path of virtue and to give the just dues to the Pandavas. His attempt to bring in peace amongst the Pandavas and the Kurus is the highest example of establishing righteousness in the world by preaching, diplomacy, statesmanship and learning. But when all this failed, as it has always failed on earth, he took another course to establish the Kingdom of Righteousness in the world. It is by removing the wicked and the sinful by death. This is the grandest aspect of his character and teachings. Thus the great battle of Kurukshetra came to be fought. See our Note in p 9.

CHAPTER XXIII.



MARCH TO KURUKSHETRA.

On the return of Krishna, the Pandava king Yudhishthira ordered his army to march to the field of Kurukshetra.* All hope of a peaceful settlement was gone;—it was now annihilation of the Panchalas or their sovereignty of the entire earth,—it was now a struggle for life and death,—a most sanguinary battle to be fought to the bitterest end.

Under the advice of Krishna the great army of the Pandava king was divided into seven divisions under seven illustrious generals, namely Drupada, Birata, Dhristadyumna, Shikhandi,† Satyaki, Chikitana,‡ and Bhima. The invincible Panchala prince Dhristadyumna was made the generalissimo, the Pandava Bhima became second in command. The king left the Panchala princess Draupadi and the other ladies, and also the servants and maid-servants, at Upaplavya. Every arrangement was made to guard over them. A strong wall was erected round the village and soldiers were placed at regular intervals.

The ancient chronicler then goes on to say:—"There arose a great commotion among the soldiers, the leaders

* After the departure of Krishna, there are six chapters in the Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata. It narrates the meeting of Karna with Kunti. She introduces herself as his mother and makes the same request as did Krishna. Her requests were also courteously declined by Karna.

Then follows a long narration by Krishna of what he did and saw in Hastinapur. We believe all these are but after-additions.

† Shikhandi and Dhristadyumna were the two sons of king Drupada.

‡ Chikitana was a great warrior.

shouting on all sides "Draw up." There rose everywhere the roars of elephants, the neighings of horses and the clatters of the chariot wheels. There rose everywhere piercing notes of conchs and loud sounds of drums. The tremendous noise caused by the marching of the great army was like that of the sea in a tempest. In front of the army drove in their respective chariots the great Panchala prince Dhristadyumna, the mighty hero Bhimasena, the young warrior Abhimanyu, and the five heroic sons of Draupadi.* They were followed by thousands of cheerful soldiers, clad in brilliant coats of armour. Infantry, cavalry, elephant-men and car-warriors followed in succession,—everyone in his proper place ; every countenance beamed with the determination to win the battle or to die on the field.

In the middle of the army was the king Yudhishthira with the treasury, with the transport carts and other vehicles and conveyances, with the armoury of weapons, with the physicians and surgeons and those that were invalid.

The king proceeded distributing curds and gold. The Brahmans went with him singing his praises. The great potentates and mighty car-warriors marched all around him. Everyone of them was determined to place him on the throne of his ancestors or to die in the attempt.

In the rear of the army were Birata and other great generals with forty thousand chariots, five times that number of horses, ten times that number of foot-soldiers and sixty thousand elephants.

* It is said that Draupadi had five sons by her five husbands. They were named, Prativindhya, Sutasoma, Srutakarmana, Sata-nika and Srutasena. All these princes were at this time grown-up young men.

Marching in this order, the great Pandava army reached the field of Kurukshetra. In a part of the field which was level and shady and where there was plenty of fodder and fuel, the king ordered his army to encamp. Avoiding cremation-grounds, sacred places, and houses, the hermitages of the Rishis and all other holy spots, the army encamped on an open part of the field which was delightful and grassy. They encamped on the bank of a lake called Hiranavati. The two great generals, Dhristadumna and Satyaki, then measured the land of encampment and threw entrenchments all around it. Innumerable tents and canvas-sheds were then set up; thousands of them were filled with eatables, drinks, fuels, bowstrings, bows, armours, various weapons, honey, clarified butter, water, powdered lac &c.

The great army was furnished with all the requisites of war, namely with the materials for repairs of chariots, with quivers to be carried on chariots, with tiger-skins to cover the chariots, with long sticks to be made spear-handles, with clubs and maces, with arrow-holders, with flags and banners, with arrows, bows and bow-strings, with various sorts of ropes and nooses, with oil and molasses, with pots full of poisonous snakes, with barbed weapons, with skins furnished with bills, with syringes for throwing hot liquids, with machines for scattering poisons, with various devices for hurling javelins, with battle-axes, sharp spikes, iron gloves, tiger and leopard-skins &c.*

With every arrangement thus complete, the great army of the Pandava king waited the approach of the

* To give our readers some idea of the war-arrangements of the ancient Aryans we purposely quote this entire chapter from the Mahavarata. It is a translation of Slokas 49-62, Chapter CLI. and Slokas 1-12, Chapter CLII., and Slokas 3-9, Chapter CLV., Udjoga Parva, Mahavarata.

Kurus. Seven *Akhauhinis* of men waited with mad eagerness to rush upon the eleven *Akhauhinis* with which the proud Kuru prince was coming to attack them. Durjodhana with his stupendous army had already left Hastinapur; he was marching in hot haste to meet his great enemy.

The ancient chronicler says:—"Durjodhana divided his men, elephants, chariots and horses into three classes, superior, inferior, and indiffernt. He then distributed them in his army according to their merits. He appointed as charioteers men of good parentage, all masters in the use of arms and competent judges of horses. The chariots were all decorated with flags and banners and had on them every sort of drugs and weapons. They were each drawn by four horses adorned with bells and pearls. One charioteer held the rein, but four others walked at the sides of the horses. Each elephant of the Kuru army had on its back seven warriors,—two with bows and arrows, two with swords, and one with a lance and a trident. Each horseman was clad in shining armour and each held a flag in his hand. The infantry were clad in golden coats of mail and armed with various weapons. In the army of the great Kuru king, each car-warrior was supported by ten elephants, one hundred horsemen and one thousand foot-soldiers."*

Bhisma, Drona, Karna, Salya,† Kripa, Jayadhratha,‡ Kritavarma, Aswathama, Sakuni and many other great warriors had been given the command of the several divisions of the great Kuru army. The old patriarch of

* See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter CLV.

† Salya was the king of Madra. He was the maternal uncle of the Pandavas.

‡ Jayadhratha was the king of Sindhu. He married the sister of Durjodhana.

the Kurus, Bhishma himself, had been installed as the generalissimo of this stupendous mass of warriors. When appealed to by Durjodhana, he had said, "Yes, I shall fight on your behalf; because I am bound by my vow to do it."* But Karna had also vowed that he would never fight so long Bhishma was alive, for he was too proud to take the help of even great Bhishma to exterminate the Pandavas and the Panchalas.† Thus Fortune favoured the Pandavas. It was a great split in the Kuru army and it materially weakened its strength. The great Bhishma and Karna fighting side by side would have been too much even for the ever invincible Arjuna.

Thus arrayed the great Kuru army encamped in front of the Panchalas and their allies on the extensive field of Kurukshetra. Above horses, elephants and chariots, above tents and canvas-sheds, above moulds and entrenchments floated the proud banner of the proud prince of Hastinapur.

Thus did millions of men stand on the field of Kurukshetra, madly eager to fall upon one another and cut one another's throat. Thus did the Aryan heroes, the best of the human race, stand to flood the earth with their hot crimson blood.‡

* See Udjoga Parva, Chapter CLVI, Sloka 17. When Bhishma vowed for his father's sake that he would never marry, so that Satyawati's son and grandsons might always ascend the throne, he also promised to his step-mother Satyawati that he would never leave her sons and grandsons, but would always protect them and fight for them. See Vol. I. page 77. and Mahavarata, Adi Parva.

† Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva, Chapter CLVI., Sloka 25.

‡ We here take leave of the Udjoga Parva, though still there are forty-three chapters more. These chapters contain nothing important in respect to the career of Krishna. In Chapters CLVI. and CLVII. are narrated the arrangements of the army of the

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PANDAVAS BEFORE THE BATTLE.

THE two armies stood facing each other on the field of Kurukshetra. The Kurus roared and foamed to fall upon the Panchalas ; they too were with difficulty restrained by their great generals. Both the contending parties were impatiently waiting for the day of the full-moon, which was thought auspicious to begin this great battle.

But the Pandavas were not happy. It was most painful to them to kill their own kith and kin, to exterminate their own race, to slay their own cousins, their own preceptor, uncle and grand-father. The good king Yudhisthira thus spoke, "The great calamity to avert which I went into exile and suffered so much misery,—that very calamity,—has overtaken us. How shall we fight with those who should not be slain ? How can we expect victory by killing men, who are our respected elders, our beloved kinsmen, our revered superiors !"*

Such was the painful feelings that weighed heavily

Kurus, Bhishma's appointment as the generalissimo, Karna's vow not to fight so long Bhishma was alive and so forth.

In Chapter CLVIII., Rukmi comes to the Pandavas and offers his services, but the offer is courteously declined. He then goes to the Kurus who also refuse to accept it. Rukmi goes back in great anger. We must say Rukmi was Krishna's brother-in-law. This story on the face of it is an interpolation.

From Chapter CLIX., to Chapter CLXIII., is the narration of Ulaka's embassy. Ulaka was one of the brothers of Durjodhana, sent, it appears, only to abuse the Pandavas and Krishna.

From Chapter CLXV., to Chapter CLXXII., is the description of various warriors of the contending armies given by Bhishma. The rest of the Udjoga Parva contains the story of Amva, also narrated by Bhishma.

* See Mahavarata, Udjoga Parva.

upon the hearts of the Pandu princes. Seven *Akhauhinis* of warriors stood ready for their sake to lay down their lives ; but they were eager to exterminate those whose blood ran through their veins. They were the only five Kurus in their own great army ! With aliens and strangers they were going to butcher their own kith and kin ! What could be more painful to them ? But there was no other alternative ; they must fight.

When the two armies were thus impatiently waiting to attack each other, Arjuna one day thus spoke to Krishna.* “O friend, place my car between the two armies. I shall see those who stand here with the desire of battle. I shall see those with whom I shall have to fight in this war. I shall see those who have assembled here to fight with the desire to do good to the evil-minded sons of our uncle, king Dhritarashtra.”

As requested Krishna took the chariot out of the encampment and placed it in front of the great army of the Kurus. The mighty Pandu prince looked in front ; he looked behind ; he saw the great army of Duryodhana, he saw also the stupendous army of Yudhis-thira. He saw present in the two armies fathers, grandfathers, preceptors, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, friends, fathers-in-law, relatives, kinsmen and well-wishers. All these dearest and nearest of friends and relatives would lie on that field of battle ! The thought overcame him. He spoke thus with great despondency to his friend and guide.

“Seeing, O Krishna, all these kinsmen present here

* With this begins the celebrated Gita. This speech and subsequent matters are translations of Slokas 21-38, and 44 to 45 of Chapter I., the Gita. We must say the Gita is a section of the Bhishma Parva, Mahavarata.

with the desire of battle, my limbs have grown languid, my mouth is dried up, my body trembles, my hairs stand on end, my bow slips from my hand, my skin burns. I am unable to stand ; my mind is whirling. O Krishna, I see evil omens on all sides. I do not see any good in killing kinsmen. O Krishna, I desire neither victory, nor sovereignty, nor pleasures. What is sovereignty, what is enjoyment, what is even life, when those for whose sake we wish to have sovereignty, enjoyment, and pleasures in this world, are all present here in this battle, giving up all hopes of life and wealth ! I see before me preceptors, fathers, grandfathers and sons, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and relatives ; O Krishna, I do not desire to kill them even if they kill me. I do not desire to do it, even for the sake of the sovereignty of the three worlds, much less for that of this earth ? What pleasures shall we derive from killing our own cousins, the sons of Dhritarashtra ? Even killing these wicked men, we shall incur sin. It is not proper that we should kill our kinsmen. How can we be happy by killing our relatives ? Blinded by avarice if they cannot see the sin they commit by exterminating the Kuru race, why should we not, who know what sin accrues from exterminating one's own race, learn to desist from it ? Alas, we are engaged in committing a great sin ! We are prepared to kill our own kinsmen from the greed of enjoying the pleasures of sovereignty ! Better would it be if unretaliating and unarmed Arjuna is killed by the armed sons of Dhritarashtra !"

Having said this, Arjuna with a sorrowful heart sat down on the car.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GREAT CRISIS.

To him then Krishna spoke thus, "Whence, O Arjuna, has come upon you in this great crisis such a delusion, —a delusion unworthy of an Aryan—a delusion which is irreligious and a source of infamy? Be not effeminate, O Arjuna; it does not suit you. Arise, shake off this mean weakness of heart."

"O friend, O Krishna," said Arjuna, "how shall I attack in this battle our revered grandfather Bhishma, and our most beloved preceptor Drona! It is better for one to live on alms than to kill such men! We do not know which of the two is better for us,—to vanquish or to be vanquished. I am confounded about my duty. I ask you, tell me what is assuredly good for me. I am your disciple, instruct me, I am at your disposal. Even if I get the undisputed sovereignty over the most prosperous kingdom of the world or that over the celestials, O Krishna, I do not see that which can remove the great pain that I shall feel in killing my most beloved kinsmen."

Having said this, Arjuna cast aside his bow and arrows. Saying, "No, I shall not fight," he remained silent. To him thus spoke Krishna smiling, "You grieve for those that deserve no grief; at the same time you speak words of wisdom." He then went on speaking things that had never before, nor has since then, been spoken in the world. It was a great crisis; the most momentous moment had at last arrived; and Krishna delivered his great teachings.*

* Then Krishna went on to deliver his grand teachings which

If Arjuna would withdraw from the fight, the Pandavas would have no chance of success, for there was none in their army who could defeat the great Karna. With the defeat and the death of the Pandavas, virtue, justice, and piety,—nay all that was good and heavenly on earth would for ever be done away with. Sin, injustice, and wickedness,—nay all that was bad and hellish on earth would flourish; therefore it was time, it was absolutely necessary, for Krishna to enunciate his great religion, to turn the mind of Arjuna to higher strata of thought and morals, to convert him to his inconceivable modes of thinking, to raise his mind so high as to make it feel no pain in performing the most painful duties, to lead his soul to that blissful land where there is eternal ecstasy.

Millions of men were ready to cut one another's throats, but it was a battle between the good and the bad. It was a question whether sin or virtue should be victorious on earth, whether the Kingdom of Righteousness would be extended in this world or whether this earth would be given over to the reign of sin and vice. All now depended on Arjuna, the prince of Pandu; but his mind was full of misgivings,—he did not know what to do. It was time, therefore, for the ever merciful Father of the universe to show that His earth and His men and women were intended for virtue and goodness, and not for vice and wickedness.*

are known by the name of the Vagavata Gita or the Divine Song. We shall begin our Vol. III., with this celebrated work, therefore we withhold our remarks upon it till then.

* In the Gita, Chapter IV., Slokas 7-8. Krishna said, "Whensoever virtue languishes and sin predominates, I create myself. I take my birth age after age for the protection of the good and the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of piety."

On the holy field of Kurushketra, amidst the roars of elephants, neighings of horses, rattles of the chariot wheels and the fearful shouts of millions of warriors mad to taste human blood, the great Krishna poured on Arjuna the ambrosia of his great teachings, the grandest that were given to man. In the midst of war and bloodshed, he raised his finger and pointed to mankind the way to the land of ever-lasting bliss. Making Arjuna an instrument, he thus established the Kingdom of Righteousness on earth.

END OF VOL. II.

Buddha said that many Buddhas had already been born and many more would be born to establish the Kingdom of Righteousness on earth.

The Bible says the day of judgment would come, Jesus would reappear, the sinful and wicked would be punished and the virtuous would be rewarded.

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